

SPHINX

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DIVERSITY IN
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Sphinx Competition Honors Concert 2003

What is the Sphinx Competition?

The Sphinx Competition offers young Black and Latino classical string players a chance to compete under the guidance of an internationally renowned panel of judges and to perform with established professional musicians in a competition setting. Its primary goals are to encourage, develop and recognize classical music talent in the Black and Latino communities.

Each year, 18 Semi-Finalists travel to Southeast Michigan to compete in the Semi-Finals and Finals Rounds of the competition. During Semi-Final auditions, the jury selects 3 finalists (called Laureates) in each division. The 3 Junior Laureates compete for their final placement accompanied by the

professional all African-American and Latino Sphinx Symphony Orchestra. The 3 Senior Laureates compete for the grand prize of \$10,000 accompanied by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Winners (Laureates) of the competition perform with over 25 orchestras around the country, including Detroit, Atlanta, Boston Pops and St. Louis Symphonies. The Honors Concert showcases the three finalists from the Junior Division, string players residing in the U.S.

After the Competition, Sphinx continues to work with their Laureates through the Professional Development Program. This is an intensive program, designed to help prepare the young artists for the

accompanied by the Sphinx Symphony. These young musicians have spent a great deal of time preparing for the competition. Most have taken private lessons for many years and practice their instruments several hours each day.

There are three rounds to the Sphinx Competition. For the first round, each competitor makes a recording of him or herself playing several pieces required by the competition. From all of the tapes that are sent in December, a panel of judges select eighteen to pass onto the semi-final round.

On February 11, these eighteen semifinalists come to Ann Arbor and Detroit for the second round. They perform in person for the judges, and they play all of their pieces. Three laureates are then selected in each



Melissa White, 2001 1st Place Junior Division Winner

professional world and a career in classical music. Through this program, our Laureates are provided professional performance opportunities. Additionally, Laureates are able to receive coachings from renowned experts in the field, such as (historically) Isaac Stern, Yo Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Ida Kavafian, Jaime Laredo and others.

division. These are the musicians you will see performing with the symphony. A piece that a soloist plays with an entire orchestra backing them up is called a concerto.

To win or be a finalist in the Sphinx Competition opens the door to all sorts of opportunities for these young performers. In addition to receiving cash prizes and soloing with the Sphinx Symphony, they receive full scholarships to summer music programs all over the country. Sphinx also helps by awarding them a Music Assistance Fund scholarship to help fund their musical development and education. Some students are even loaned beautiful instruments to use for a full year after the competition. But regardless of what material prizes may be awarded, succeeding in the Sphinx Competition does much to further their reputations as some of the most talented and capable musicians of their generation.

Meet Gareth Johnson, Junior Division Winner of Sphinx Competition 2002



Gareth Johnson, Junior Division Winner 2002

Gareth Johnson is on a roll. Last February, the 17-year-old violinist won the junior division of the Sphinx

Competition with his performance of the first movement of Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3 in G Major. That feat led to Johnson's soloing in performances of the first movement of the Bruch Violin Concerto in G Minor with the New World and Atlanta Symphonies and the Boston Pops. The New World Symphony even invited him back to perform the concerto in its entirety last December.

The St. Louis native, whose family recently moved to Florida, also spent the summer studying violin at Encore, the Cleveland Institute of Music's

intensive violin workshop, on a Sphinx summer scholarship. Having graduated from high school early, he began studying last fall at the Lynn University Conservatory of Music in Boca Raton, Florida, while also looking forward to receiving private coaching from Itzhak Perlman and Ida Kavafian—all members of Sphinx's honorary committee—as part of the organization's professional development program.

Small wonder then that Johnson says that winning the Sphinx Competition "completely changed my life."

Meet Aaron Dworkin, Founder/President

Mr. Dworkin started playing the violin at age 5. He studied at the Interlochen Arts Academy and the University of Michigan, graduating with High Honors. He had the opportunity to study with great teachers such as Vladimir Graffman, Berl Senofsky and Stephen Shipps. Mr. Dworkin also plays piano, and electric violin. He has produced and recorded two CDs entitled *Ebony Rhythm* and *Bar-Talk* and wrote book of poetry called *They Said I Wasn't Really Black*. Mr. Dworkin has given lectures for students and professionals on the topic of career development in classical music. He has served as a juror for other competitions,

including the Lansing Symphony Youth Soloist Competition and received many awards, including the SBC Ameritech Excellence Award, the University of Michigan's African-American Alumni Council 2002 5 Under 10 Award!

When he was younger, he often found himself to be one of a few minority classical musicians in an orchestra, which made him want to change the situation. He founded the Sphinx Organization, which now helps recognize many minority youths around the country by providing them with exposure and opportunities in classical music world.



Aaron Dworkin, Founder/President of Sphinx

Who Plays in the Competition?



Sam Johnson, 1999 1st Place Laureate, in a lesson with internationally renowned cellist Yo Yo Ma.

The performers who compete in the Sphinx competition are Black and Latino string instrumentalists, or musicians who play violin, viola, cello and bass. There are two divisions in the competition: Junior (under age 18) and Senior (ages 18-26). You will see the final round of the Junior Division competition on February 13, 2003. These finalists will perform at the Power Center

What Will Happen at the Performance?

The Honors Concert may be different from other classical concerts or performance you may have seen in the past. This is because the concert is also a competition. During the days leading up to the Honors Concert, three finalists under age 18 will be chosen. The Honors Concert will have several parts. First, you will be welcomed to the theater and hear some announcements. Next, the Concertmaster

will come out to tune the orchestra. (You can read more about this in the *Orchestra Etiquette* article.) Then, each soloist will come out one at a time to play a movement of a concerto with the Sphinx Symphony. A concerto is a long piece of classical music divided into sections called movements. During the soloist's performance, it is important to be absolutely silent, because any distraction might break the

finalist's concentration and cause him or her to make a mistake. After each of the three finalists have performed, the Sphinx Symphony will play a piece. Then, the conductor, Kay George Roberts, will answer some student questions from the audience. When the judges have reached the decision, the laureates will be called onstage and a winner announced!



Meet the Sphinx Symphony

The Sphinx Symphony is the unique all African-American and Latino orchestra comprised of top professionals from around the country. This ensemble of over sixty members includes past and current members of the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Met Opera Orchestra, Detroit, Atlanta, Baltimore, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, St. Louis and Puerto Rico Symphonies, as well as faculty

Patrice Jackson, 2002 1st Place Senior Division Winner, soloing with the Sphinx Symphony

members of leading music institutions, including Peabody and New England Conservatories, Harlem School of the Arts, Rutgers University, and the University of Michigan. This ensemble fulfills a unique multi-purpose role: its members serve as mentors both on stage and by providing masterclasses and lectures, in addition to promoting works by Black and Latino composers during the Sphinx Symphony Concert.

Meet the Conductor, Kay George Roberts

Active as a guest conductor, Kay George Roberts has conducted the Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Louisiana Philharmonic, Nashville, and National Symphony Orchestras, among others. Ms. Roberts made a highly-acclaimed debut at the Lugano Festival with the Orchestra Svizzera Italiana. An advocate for new and overlooked music, she has been praised by critics for her "precision and passion" and for leading audiences "to make new discoveries." A champion of music education, she is a professor of music at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and director of a new string training program for elementary school students

that fosters diversity in classical music. She is the founder and music director of the ensemble-in-residence, String Currents, which promotes American music. Dr. Roberts studied at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein, Gustav Meier, Seiji Ozawa and at the Bachakademie Stuttgart with John Eliot Gardiner. A graduate of Fisk University, Ms. Roberts is an accomplished violinist with master degrees in violin performance and orchestral conducting from Yale University. She is the first woman to earn the Doctor of Musical Arts in orchestral conducting from Yale University where she studied with Otto-Werner Mueller.



Kay George Roberts, Sphinx Symphony Conductor, 2003

Orchestra Etiquette

Orchestras have a routine they go through to get ready for a performance. By the time you arrive, many of the musicians will probably be on stage already, warming up and practicing tricky spots.

When it's time for the concert to begin, Manuel Ramos, the concertmaster, will walk on stage by himself. The concertmaster is the primary violinist of the orchestra, and one of the important leaders of the ensemble. It is appropriate to applaud for the concertmaster, to which

he will reply with a bow. Then he will stand in front of the orchestra and direct the tuning. He will indicate to the principal oboist to play an "A," several times. Each time, a different group of instruments will play with him and make sure their pitches match his. When the tuning is complete, Mr. Ramos will sit down.

When the orchestra is ready, then it's time for the conductor, Kay George Roberts, to come out. The audience will applaud for her as well, and the entire

orchestra will stand. The conductor has a huge responsibility. In order to lead rehearsals, she must know every musician's part and how they connect to each other. She helps each direct the overall plan of the piece, indicating entrances, tempos, dynamics, and character. The entire orchestra watches her in order to know what happens next. As you watch her, observe how her movement is reflected in the music. How do the musicians respond to her? How does the music change?

What Else Does Sphinx Do?

Musical Encounters Program

The Musical Encounters Program is an extensive in-school education and awareness program. Through this program, Sphinx Laureates visit schools in underserved areas nationwide to perform and engage in a question and answer session. These engagements usually involve a brief performance of a work by a minority composer or a piece that is familiar to the students, possibly a spiritual. During the

question and answer session, students have the opportunity to talk with the Laureate and learn more about his or her instrument, techniques and interests as well as why he or she began playing and, most importantly, how they might begin playing a string instrument. When a Laureate travels to perform with a professional orchestra, he or she also visits schools in that city.



Patrice Jackson talks with students from MacDowell Elementary School in Detroit, Michigan.



Recital Series

Through the Sphinx Recital Series, Sphinx Laureates perform in Borders stores around the country the year following their participation in Sphinx. With the support of Borders, Sphinx initiated this program to increase exposure and provide recognition of young minority talent nationwide. Through these

community programming efforts, the Sphinx attempts to eliminate the barrier to classical music appreciation by providing a high-visibility forum through which all families can be exposed to and appreciate the abilities of these talented young players.

Gareth Johnson performing at Borders in Ann Arbor, Michigan

Classical Connections Program

Classical Connections work to increase awareness of and diversity in classical music within communities throughout the state of Michigan. In this program, outreach performances are given by Semi-Finalists of the Sphinx Competition or highly trained local musicians. Classical Connections performances are given in various venues, including

libraries, churches, community centers, museums and other community sites. Visits include a performance as well as a brief question and answer session. Sphinx Classical Connections also features an interactive, educational CD-ROM, which is distributed to schools and other community venues for use by teachers, students and parents.

For details about Sphinx education programs, contact Sphinx Education Coordinator Kimi-Kali E. Jones at kimi@sphinxmusic.org.

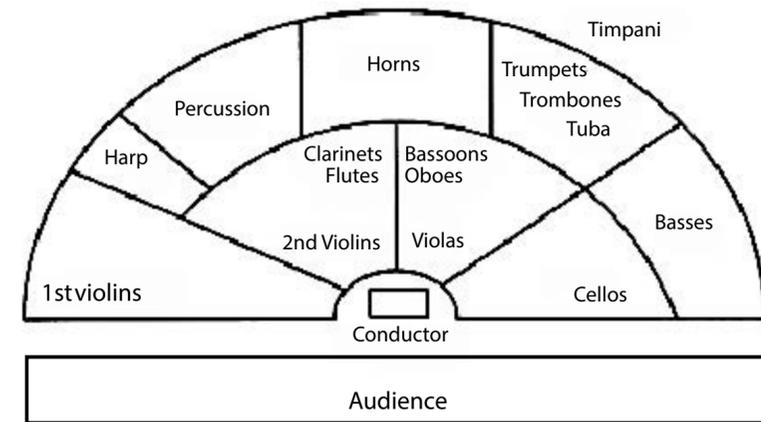
Crossword Answers: Across: 3) concertmaster 6) bass 9) violin
Down: 1) Dworkin 2) symphony 4) concerto 5) Roberts 7) Sphinx 8) cello



William Johnson, bassist with the Sphinx Symphony, with a student at the Flint Public Library.

A Map to the Orchestra

There are four "families" of instruments in an orchestra: the STRINGS, WINDS, BRASS, and PERCUSSION. Each of the families use instruments that make similar sounds and are played in similar ways. The picture below is a "map" of the orchestra that shows where each instrument sits in an the ensemble. While you watch the Sphinx Symphony perform, use this map to identify each instrument you see and hear on the stage.



The **STRING** section consists of four main instruments: violins, violas, cellos and basses. In orchestra, the violins are divided into two sections. These instruments share the same design. Four strings are stretched across a hollow, wooden body. Strands of horsehair are stretched tightly across a wooden stick to form the bow. Sound is produced by drawing the bow across the strings (arco) and by plucking the strings with the player's fingertips (pizzicato).

In the modern **BRASS** has four horns, three trumpets, two trombones, a bass trombone, and a tuba. Sound is produced like the wind instruments, through the vibration of air in the hollow metal tube. The sound quality of brass instruments is unique, ranging from the brilliant fanfare of the trumpets to the bellows of the tuba. Players may also insert a mutewhich muffles the sound produced, or, if the player continues to attempt to force the sound out, creates a metallic, menacing tone.

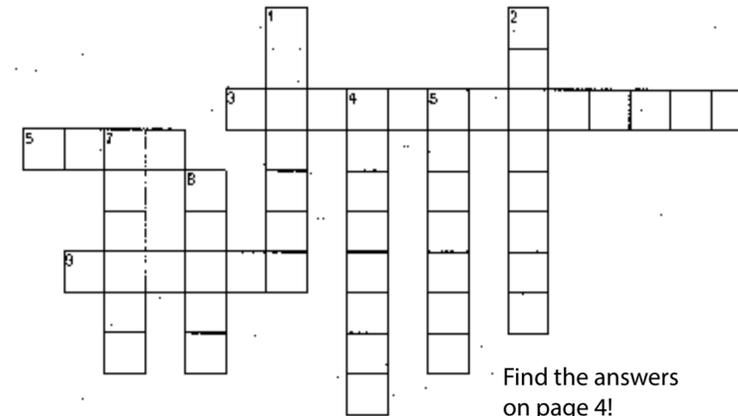
The modern orchestra's **WIND** section has two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets and two bassoons to which are added a piccolo, english horn, contra bassoon and sometimes a bass clarinet. The design of these instruments are basically the same: a hollow tube along which there is a series of holes, covered by keys. This section is placed in the center of the orchestral layout as the instruments are frequently given many solo part to play.

The **PERCUSSION** section has the greatest variety of instruments; it includes anything you can hit. The Russian composer Tchaikovsky even used a cannon in his 1812 Overture. Pitched instruments (marimba, vibraphone) can play melodies and are laid out like a piano keyboard and struck with mallets. The other percussion instruments (drums), however, are restricted only to rhythms. But the wider range of available sounds can be manipulated in many ways to produce new, interesting blends of tones and colors.

Sphinx Activities

Sphinx Crossword Puzzle:

All the answers can be found in this guide!



Find the answers on page 4!

Across

- Title for the violinist who tunes the orchestra
- Largest string instrument
- Highest string instrument

Down

- Sphinx director, Aaron _____
- The Sphinx _____ is made up of professional musicians from all over the country
- Type of piece written for a soloist and an orchestra
- Conductor Kay George _____
- The _____ Competition
- String instrument held between the knees

Discussion Questions

• Which performers did you like the most? What made you feel this way? Were you impressed by their skill? Did you enjoy their stage presence? Did you prefer the piece they played?

• How do you think the soloists prepare for the competition? How much do you expect they practice? What do you think they do to prevent nerves and to stay calm?

• The Sphinx Competition is the only string competition specifically for minorities. How does it help provide musical opportunities and development to young musicians? How do you think this could eventually change professional symphonies and the music industry in the long run?

• How did the musicians in the orchestra interact with each other? Did they ever talk to each other? Could you see the string players watching their section leaders? Did the percussionists walk around the back of the orchestra from one instrument to another?

• How do you imagine it would feel to play as a soloist with the orchestra? Would you be nervous? Would it be easier or harder to play with the orchestra than with a pianist?

• If you could be play any instrument in the orchestra, which would you play? The cello, flute, french horn, timpani? Why would you want to play this instrument? Would you want to be the conductor?



The University Musical Society is proud to provide educational and logistical support for the Sphinx Competition Honors Concert 2003 as part of its extensive educational programming. Additional K-12 educational opportunities include professional development workshops for teachers, daytime Youth Performances, discounted tickets to select classical concerts, and classroom visits. For more information, contact the Youth Education Program at 734.615.0122 or visit UMS online at www.ums.org.

More Sphinx Concerts!

Sphinx Symphony Concert: Featuring Sphinx competition laureate Melissa White and the Grammy award-winning ensemble, Take 6!
Sunday, February 16, 2:00pm
Detroit Orchestra Hall
Tickets \$10

Senior Division Finals Concert: Featuring the Senior Division's three finalists as soloists with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.
Wednesday, February 19, 8:00pm
Detroit Orchestra Hall
Tickets \$8-35

To Purchase Tickets
Contact the
Detroit Orchestra Hall Box Office
313.576.5111
<http://www.detroitsof.org>