

Sustaining Notes

The Newsletter for Symphonie Jeunesse Youth Orchestra for Strings

Vol. 2
No. 2
February 1,
2021

SJO News

We hope everyone is off to a good start of 2021. With the beginnings of COVID 19 vaccines under way, we have renewed hope of the orchestra restarting rehearsals this year. As of now we have no date, but we are generally considering the summer months as a possible time frame.

This will depend on County Health department requirements as well as the re-opening of First Presbyterian Church for our rehearsal space. We will keep you informed as we know more. Meanwhile, keep practicing!

This month we honor Black History Month and celebrate Valentine's Day.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Mrs. Tacchia .at mbernardel@gmail.com or Mrs. Myerchin, editor and Board President at msnomisue@gmail.com.

Vivo Vocabulary

Trill ~ instruction to sustain rapid alternation between two different pitches.

Staccato ~ notes that are short and dry and played shorter than their normal value.

Rondo ~ a type of orchestral form or song structure. It consists of multiple repeating sections.

Assai ~ Italian: very. Often as a speed indication to performers, as in allegro assai, (very fast.)

Modulation ~ the process of changing from one musical key to another.

Mrs. T.'s Listening List

I would like to introduce you to ten African-American composers of classical music, dating back to 1778 through the early 1900's. Some of these composers are well-known in the compositional world such as, Scott Joplin, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and William Grant-Still Others, whom you will discover here are less well-known but equally deserving of notoriety.

The earliest of these distinguished composers is Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges Joseph de Bologne, (1745-1799), a composer, conductor and virtuoso violinist. Educated in France, he was the son of a slave woman and a wealthy French plantation owner. He is remembered as the first classical composer of African origins. I urge you to listen to his Symphony Op. 11 in D major.

Child prodigy, George Bridgetower, (1780-1860) was educated in England and was the son of African and German parents. He was giving violin concerts in Paris and London by the age of 11. His compositional works are written for keyboard, solo voice and other instruments.

Virtuoso of the violin and a composer, Francis "Frank" Johnson, (1792-1844) was the first African-American composer to have his works published as sheet music. He was the first to

participate in racially integrated concerts in the US. He wrote more than 200 compositions in various styles.

Afro-Cuban violinist, José Silvestre White, (1835-1918) studied at the Paris Conservatory and later went on to teach there for many years. An accomplished violinist, he performed twice with the New York Philharmonic in 1875 and 1876.

Composer of popular songs and a classical pianist, Thomas Wiggins, (1849-1908), autistic and blind since birth, he learned to play the piano by ear at age 4. He toured as a soloist and became the highest grossing pianist of the 19th century.

Known as the "King of Ragtime," Scott Joplin, (1868-1917) only lived to be 49 years old. You may recognize his compositions such as, "Maple Leaf Rag" and "The Entertainer." In 1976, Joplin was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, (1875-1912) was an Afro-British composer of Creole descent. He studied violin at the Royal College of Music and composition under Charles Villiers Stanford. Conductor and faculty member of music study, he is best known for his composition, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, composed in 1898. He lived to be only 37 years old.

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Mrs. T's Listening List (cont.)

Florence B. Price, (1887-1953), was the first African-American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer and the first to have a composition played by a major orchestra. The Chicago Symphony premiered her Symphony in E minor in 1933.

The First African-American composer to have an opera performed by a major opera company, (New York City Opera), William Grant Still, (1895-1978) was an oboist, arranger, conductor and composer from Little Rock, Arkansas. His most well-known work is Symphony No. 1 "Afro-American," which premiered in 1931.

George Walker, (b.1922) had an early career as a piano soloist. His compositions are from solo keyboard works to chamber music, vocal music and orchestral music. He was inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame in 2000. Walker studied music at Oberlin Conservatory and the Curtis Institute of Music.



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Accent On

Mr. Bill Paule

Former SJO Board Treasurer and Friend of the Orchestra

I first became acquainted with the Tacchias when they taught strings and chorus at Palm Avenue Elementary school where I've been teaching fourth grade for 25 years. I first became aware of Symphonie Jeunesse through one of my former students, Dana Polley, one of the founding members of the orchestra (featured in Sustaining Notes Nov. 2020, no. 6). I went to one of their concerts and was awed by the performance.

I became a regular attendee of SJO concerts. Eventually, Michele approached me about the 2012 Summer tour to Cambria, driving the instrument and luggage van. My hobby is collecting vintage guitars. A friend and I travel around the west to sell at vintage guitar shows, so I have some real-world experience with loading instruments in a van and long-distance driving.

That first trip to Cambria was a fantastic experience. I was moved when the orchestra members, many of whom had first started learning to play under Michele's teaching at Palm Avenue, shared what being part of SJO meant to them and its importance in their lives.

Eventually, my participation within SJO grew, and I became a Board member and later Treasurer.

My biggest honor was when I was allowed to briefly share the

stage with the orchestra. The orchestra had a Beach Boys medley in their repertoire that season. I jokingly suggested to Michele that they could use a musical saw to replicate the theremin part in "Good Vibrations."

Little did I know that I would be appointed to play it. So, for three performances I was on stage with the orchestra bowing on the blade of an old hand saw trying to squeak out an approximation of the theremin part of "Good Vibrations."

I have lots of fond memories of the trips to Cambria and all the U-turns along the way. I added a tour stop to the Nethercutt Collection, a musical instrument museum in Sylmar one year. Then there was the time we showed up for a performance in Atascadero only to realize the sheet music was back in Cambria, and I had to drive back to retrieve it. I was touched when the orchestra performed an arrangement of "Miserlou" that I had purchased for them.

At the end of the 2019 season, I stepped down from my SJO responsibilities, little knowing there wouldn't be a 2020 season. I look forward to a time when SJO can once again share their music with an audience. I will definitely be there.

~ Coda ~

"Love cannot express the idea of music, while music may give an idea of love."

~ Hector Berlioz