In February, Sphinx brought 19 of the nation’s top young Black and Latino string players to Detroit for the 21st annual Sphinx Competition. This year’s competition was filled with amazing performances by our semi-finalists, laureates, and Sphinx’s first-ever professional vocal ensemble, EXIGENCE.

22-year-old violinist Rubén Rengel, a student at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, was named first place Laureate of the Senior Division on Sunday, February 4, 2018. He will receive the $50,000 Robert Frederick Smith prize and a custom-made gold bow by Berg Bows International, as well as the opportunity to be featured with Sphinx Soloist Program Partners – including a June performance with the Houston Symphony Orchestra. Cellist Gabriel Martins won the $20,000 second place prize, and violinist Randall Goosby won the $10,000 third place prize. Randall was also the recipient of Sphinx’s Audience Choice Award sponsored by Mercedes-Benz Financial Services.

17-year-old cellist Levi Powe, from Tucson, AZ, became the first place Laureate in the Junior Division Sphinx Competition on Friday, February 2, 2018. Levi will receive a $10,000 award and have the opportunity to be featured with Sphinx Soloist Program Partners. Violinist Sophia Ayer won the $5,000 second place prize and violist Sophia Inés Valenti won the $3,000 third place prize.

The culmination of the weekend was the Sphinx Competition Finals Concert at the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center. The Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, led by Maestro Carlos Miguel Prieto and sponsored by Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, was featured in a brilliant and exciting performance of Ginastera’s Danza Final, Malambo from Estancias. The concert was brought to a close with a deeply moving collaborative performance of the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Beethoven’s Christ on the Mount of Olives featuring the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra and EXIGENCE, under the direction of founding conductor Eugene Rogers.

Impacting Communities Across America: 2018 Sphinx Virtuosi National Tour

The Sphinx Virtuosi, presented by JPMorgan Chase & Co., will embark on their 11th National Tour this fall. This year’s tour program, entitled Music without Borders, illuminates works by composers from communities searching for harmony and separated by time, distance, hardship and conflict. The aim of the program is to use music to unite; to share inspiration from diverse voices that remind us of our common humanity. The tour will include works by Emmy nominated Syrian-American composer Kareem Roustom, Dmitri Shostakovich, Gaspar Cassadó, and features a newly commissioned work by Grammy Award-winning jazz trumpeter and composer, Terence Blanchard.

The other key aspect of the Sphinx Virtuosi tour is community engagement through school visits and performances, providing students an amazing educational opportunity and in many cases their first interaction with classical music. Teachers and administrators have shared that students are truly impacted by the experience, leaving feeling inspired and excited about classical music.

There are a few available dates remaining to book the Sphinx Virtuosi for a performance date or coordinate an outreach visit. Available booking dates include Sep 25–Oct 6, Oct 18–19, and Oct 22–26. If you are interested in booking the Sphinx Virtuosi for the 2018 Sphinx Virtuosi tour, please contact California Artists Management (www.calartists.com).

“...All in all, this reviewer has not felt so heartened by a group of young musicians since hearing the early recordings of Gustavo Dudamel with the young players from El Sistema, electrically charged performances of as high a caliber as any other professional group, but with the vital energy of a life-and-death mission.”
- Roriane Schrade
New York Concert Review

Thanks to the generous support of Robert F. Smith, Founder, Chairman & CEO of Vista Equity Partners, for his historic pledge of $1M to sustain the Sphinx Virtuosi Tour over 10 years! Through this gift Sphinx will continue to have an impact in communities across the country for years to come.
A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear La Familia:

I hope you are enjoying the beginning of spring, this inspiring season of renewal and new beginnings!

The Sphinx Team and I could not have been more grateful for each individual who attended SphinxConnect, the epicenter for artists and leaders in diversity, and the 21st annual Sphinx Competition. I was energized by thought-provoking discussions, humbled by the stories and ideas of my fellow attendees, and truly moved by the enormous sense of community that was ever-present throughout these events.

So we move, more galvanized than ever, into our next season of programming! We will soon celebrate the progress of our beginning students when our Detroit and Flint Overture programs hold their spring recitals. For our students aged 11-17, applications for our intensive summer music program, Sphinx Performance Academy, are currently open and we are excitedly preparing for two amazing sessions with top conservatory partners – Curtis Institute of Music and Cleveland Institute of Music – and a stellar faculty.

As always, we thank you so much for your support and enthusiasm, which lifts us up in everything we do.

Warmly,

Afa

Sphinx Performance Academy application deadline: April 11
Overture Recitals: May 18
SPA at Curtis Summerfest: June 10 - August 4
SPA at Cleveland Institute: July 21 - August 4
Sphinx Virtuosi National Tour: September 27 - October 20
Sphinx Virtuosi at Carnegie Hall: October 11
Sphinx Competition application deadline: November 5

2019

22nd Annual Sphinx Virtuosi and SphinxConnect: January 30 - February 3

February 1st saw the launch of SphinxConnect 2018, the second annual epicenter for artists and leaders in diversity. Sphinx welcomed a record number of attendees to Detroit’s famed Renaissance Center for this transformative convening, including hundreds of musicians, industry leaders, educators, students, funders, diversity advocates, and more.

This year’s conference was the largest in Sphinx’s history! By the numbers, SphinxConnect 2018:

- welcomed more than 600 attendees
- presented over 60 speakers, comprising leaders, innovators, and trendsetters in the field
- produced the 1st pre-conference workshop on teaching artistry with Eric Booth
- provided attendees with the opportunity to attend 30+ sessions and events
- encouraged connections and networking at 2 receptions
- Highlights of the convening included:
  - an opening plenary by Sphinx founder Aaron P. Dworkin
  - a closing plenary featuring a world premiere of a collaboration between violinist DBR and movement artist Lil Buck
  - Sphinx Artist Showcase, presenting diverse repertoire and performers to managers, presenters, and industry leaders
  - opportunities to connect with new projects and organizations at the Expo Hall
  - master classes with Sphinx Competition jury members

The conference was a transformative experience for those in attendance: from important connections, professional and educational development, to ideas and actions. You won’t want to miss near year’s convening! Save the date: Jan. 30 - Feb. 3, 2019. For more information, or to watch videos of past sessions, visit www.SphinxConnect.org.

As a unique opportunity, the Sphinx Orchral Partners Audition (SOPA) welcomed musicians to try to audition for a panel comprising the following orchestras on January 31st!

Arkansas Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Carnegie Hall, Cincinnati Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Grant Park Music Festival, Iris Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Memphis Symphony, Nashville Symphony, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony

SOPA is made possible through the support of Bank of America

EXIGENCE, a professional vocal ensemble that highlighting the artistry within Black and Latino communities, launched in conjunction with SphinxConnect and the 21st annual Sphinx Competition. Led by founding conductor Eugene Rogers, the mission of EXIGENCE is to promote excellence and diversity through choral music within Black and Latino communities.

The musicians of EXIGENCE offered numerous performances during their launch, including concerts at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the historic Hartford Memorial Baptist Church where audience raved about their musicianship and ability to excel across numerous genres. To view footage of these exciting performances, visit www.ExistenceVocalEnsemble.org. This exciting ensemble breaks barriers - if you are interested in presenting this historic group in the future, please email Exigence@SphinxMusic.org.
Sphinx Overture students are having a very exciting spring semester! Sphinx Artists Elena Urioste and Javier Orman, and Guest Artist Mollie Westbrook visited Overture classes in Detroit and Flint elementary schools. Students listened to our guest artists perform and worked on movement, improvisation, teamwork, and ensemble skills. They even composed their own short pieces and practiced playing “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” with our guests. Isis Pasco, a Maybury Elementary student who is the sponsored Overture Scholar of the Greater Wayne County Chapter of Links, Inc., was excited to learn: “I like how we do Twinkle Twinkle Little Star because I always wanted to play it on violin.” In addition, Overture students from Maybury Elementary attended the Sphinx Competition Honors Concert and got to see their teacher perform in the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra. We look forward to hearing all of our Overture students perform in their end-of-year recitals this May!

Something to Ponder:

“Don’t sit down and wait for the opportunities to come. Get up and make them.”

-- Madam C.J. Walker