Semi-Finalists Announced in 21st Annual Sphinx Competition

The 21st Annual Sphinx Competition, presented by the DTE Energy Foundation, will welcome 19 of the nation’s top young Black and Latino string players to Detroit from January 31 - February 4, 2018. The semi-finalists are divided into two divisions based on age, and each culminates in a special concert at the Max M. And Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center.

- The Junior Division Honors Concert is free to the public and will be held on Friday, February 2nd at noon.
- The Senior Division Finals Concert will be held on Sunday, February 4th. The finalists will perform with the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, led by guest conductor Maestro Carlos Prieto, and the winner will receive the $50,000 Robert Frederick Smith Prize and a custom-made gold bow by Berg Bows International. Sphinx’s new vocal ensemble EXIGENCE will perform under the direction of founding conductor Eugene Rogers.

The Finals Concert will be streamed live via the Sphinx website and recorded for national broadcast on PBS stations, including Detroit Public Television. For more information on tickets to the Honors and Finals Concerts, please visit: www.sphinxmusic.org/sphinx-competition-concerts

Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center: Key artistic partner and exclusive home of the 2018 Sphinx Competition

Purchase Your Finals Tickets!
Sunday, Feb. 4, 2018 at 2PM
$15 General Admission
www.dso.org

Semi-Finalists Announced in 21st Annual Sphinx Competition

Presented by

Nicholas Abrahams, 17, violin
Dreyfoos School of the Arts
Teacher: Elizabeth Faidley

Claire Arlas-Kim, 16, violin
William Friend High School
Teacher: Almita Vamos

Sophia Ayer, 15, violin
McCallum High School
Teacher: Pasha Sabouri

Phillip Hammond, 15, violin
Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music
Teacher: Brenda Brenner

Irina Casasnovas Jilobokov, 17, violin;
Bridgeway Academy
Teacher: Almita Vamos

Benjamin Samuel Harris, 29, bass
The Juilliard School
Teachers: Itzhak Perlman, Catherine Cho

Levi Powe, 17, cello
Homeschool
Teacher: Mary Beth Tyndall

Nicholas Villalobos, 30, bass
The Academy
Teacher: Catalin Rotaru

Guilherme Nardelli Monegatto, 22, cello;
The Juilliard School
Teacher: Timothy Eddy

Randall Goosby, 21, violin
The Juilliard School
Teachers: Itzhak Perlman, Catherine Cho

Benjamin Samuel Harris, 29, bass
The Juilliard School

Allison Lovera, 25, violin
Roosevelt University, Chicago College of Performing Arts
Teacher: Almita Vamos

Hannah White, 17, violin
The Music Institute of Chicago,
The Academy
Teacher: Danielle Belen

Mira Williams, 19, viola
New England Conservatory
Teacher: Kim Kashkashian
Dear Friends,

I hope 2017 is coming to a joyful close for all of you, as it is for us at Sphinx. To me, this special edition of our newsletter – the closing newsletter of our 20th year – is a riveting symphony of celebration, gratitude, and most importantly, hope for the future. It will invite you to join us in reflection on the many wonderful opportunities and honors that Sphinx was fortunate to have during our 20th anniversary year, and I hope it will compel you to stand with us as we journey toward our grand vision in service of our artists and communities, for the next two decades.

With a most thankful heart, I credit our Sphinx family with the triumphs that we have had this year. None of this is possible without your support, advocacy, friendship, and passion, and we share every victory with all of you.

Warmly,
Afa

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Sphinx Launches EXIGENCE, a Vocal Ensemble Led by Eugene Rogers

Together with founding director Eugene Rogers – the University of Michigan’s Director of Choirs Designate (July 2018) and Professor of Conducting – Sphinx has launched EXIGENCE, a professional vocal ensemble with the mission of promoting excellence and diversity through choral music within Black and Latino communities by creating a platform for soloists and composers of color while inspiring and challenging audiences around the country and world.

The ensemble is comprised of vocal artists, including solo performers, vocal teachers, conductors and composers. Repertoire will range from traditional classical concert repertoire to newly commissioned works; works by Black and Latino composers will also be programmed with the goals of highlighting the multi-faceted personnel of the ensemble, giving voice to composers of color, and challenging the audience to consider pertinent issues affecting society today.

Don’t miss the inaugural performances of EXIGENCE in the Sphinx Artist Showcase at SphinxConnect (February 2) and with the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra at the Sphinx Competition Finals Concert (February 4).

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Join our Musical Chairs family TODAY!

Support the 21st annual Sphinx Competition by sponsoring a musician in the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, the unique all Black and Latino orchestra that mentors and performs alongside the competition semifinalists. As a Musical Chairs sponsor, you get to name a chair in the orchestra, and will have the opportunity to meet your sponsored artist and watch them perform from Box Seats at our Competition Finals Concert in Detroit on February 4th, 2018.

To secure your box seat tickets and reserve a sponsorship today, please contact Therese Goussy at therese@sphinxmusic.org or 313-877-9300 x713, or use the enclosed giving envelope to make a $1,500 donation.

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Spotlight on 2017 MPower Artist Grants: Impact So Far!

Anita Dumar, Ivalas String Quartet

Sphinx Competition alumnus Anita Dumar is a member of the Ivalas String Quartet, comprised of students of color from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance with the goal “to contribute to greater visibility for classical musicians of color, to inspire all young musicians to explore the unique joys of chamber music, and to be living proof of the power, spark, and beauty that diversity brings to all art forms, specifically demonstrated in the unparallel world of string quartet playing.” A Sphinx MPower grant made it possible for the quartet to be the inaugural Fellowship String Quartet at the Anchorage Chamber Music Festival, a program for young musicians in Anchorage, Alaska.

“I know I speak for the other members when I say that our time at ACMF was nothing short of life changing...We are especially excited about implementing what we have learned as we are gearing up for several competitions this next year and looking ahead to festivals for next summer! My utmost gratitude to MPower for providing the funds necessary for the Ivalas Quartet to attend the Anchorage Chamber Music Festival. It has been an unforgettable summer of growth.”

Steven Baloue

Thanks to his MPower Artist Grant, Steven Baloue was able to purchase a viola from Michael Becker Fine Violins. Having a professional quality viola enabled Steven to make the most of performance opportunities including as the Principal Violist with the Merit School of Music Philharmonic Orchestra at the Symphony Center in Chicago, IL. Additionally, having this quality instrument will help Steven going forward as he prepares for the National Youth Orchestra USA 2017 as well as his upcoming university auditions.

“When playing the Michael Becker viola, I was able to project more and produce a richer, stronger viola sound. I’ve gained increased confidence...knowing I have a more powerful and richer sounding instrument. I would like to thank the Sphinx Organization as well as the generous sponsors who have made this award possible.”

Elena Urioste & Melissa White, Intermission

Elena Urioste – Sphinx Competition Laureate, Sphinx Virtuosi alum, and Sphinx Medals of Excellence recipient – and Melissa White – Sphinx Competition Laureate and Harlem Quartet founding member – received an MPower grant to fund the launch of Intermission Sessions & Retreat, a new program which celebrates the symbiosis between music and yoga and encourages a more mindful approach to practicing, performing, and musicmaking in general.

Elena and Melissa launched the first Intermission Retreat in summer 2017 at the Willburton Inn in Manchester, Vermont. 19 musicians and yogis, including 5 Sphinx artists, gathered for one week of meditation, yoga classes, practice time, and organized group excursions.

“Our Sphinx MPower Artist Grant afforded us the flexibility to run a glorious inaugural Intermission Retreat...With the MPower grant, we were able to afford things like high-quality yoga mats, a piano rental for our composers and singer to practice on, and several marketing strategies to empower our participants to become ambassadors for Intermission. The magic of a week-long yoga retreat for musicians was able to unfold completely free of obstacles, and blossomed into a deeply moving journey within ourselves as individuals and as a group.”

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Contributors: Editor: Therese Goussy, Managing Editor: Abigail Venman
Special Artistic Advisor: Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg
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400 Renaissance Center, Ste 2103
Detroit, MI 48243
313-877-9300
info@sphinxmusic.org
www.sphinxmusic.org
Sphinx20: Inextinguishable Hope, Irrepressible Voices

When Aaron P. Dworkin founded the Sphinx Organization in 1997, he hardly could have known how tangibly relevant and crucial its mission would be in 2017. The year of Sphinx’s 20th anniversary has brought its share of obstacles to the worlds of art and social justice; however, the organization’s prolific programming and indefatigable efforts to diversify the landscape of classical music continue to grow too loud for the industry to ignore.

20th annual Sphinx Competition and launch of SphinxConnect
- Sphinx celebrates its 20th annual Sphinx Competition for young Black and Latino string players with a powerful guest appearance by the University of Michigan Men’s Glee Club and renowned gospel singer Karen Clark Sheard, performing Joel Thompson’s poignant Seven Last Words of the Unarmed.
- More than 500 students, musicians, educators, and other arts professionals gathered in Detroit for the launch of SphinxConnect, the epicenter for artists and leaders in diversity. Melissa Harris-Perry and soprano Martina Arroyo were among the esteemed guest speakers.

Aaron and Afa Dworkin receive the 2017 Human Spirit Award at the Kennedy Center
- At this celebration of cultural life in the United States, the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. honored the Dworkins as citizen artists for their work in founding and leading Sphinx, showing that Sphinx’s voice is far from silent in our nation’s capital.

Sphinx awards a total of $150,000 in artist grants to emerging musicians and community leaders of color at the Sphinx Medals of Excellence celebration held in Washington D.C.

INTAKE Organization, founded by Sphinx alum Angie Durrell with the help of Sphinx MPower grants, is a finalist for the 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. Sphinx is proud to be a catalyst in launching other organizations that join the fight for social justice in the arts.

Sphinx Performance Academy marks 13 years of providing opportunities each summer for 64 Black and Latino string students to experience a full-scholarship chamber music intensive, and celebrates a new partnership with the Cleveland Institute of Music and Case Western Reserve University.

Sphinx MPower Artist Grants
- Sphinx awards more than $180,000 in MPower Artist Grants
- Sphinx continues to empower musicians of color by distributing grants supporting alumni to purchase instruments; participate in competitions and festivals; launch conferences, organizations, and tours.

Sphinx MPower Artist Grant recipient
- "Since winning the Sphinx Competition, I have had opportunities that I never even dreamed of when I first picked up the violin.”
  - Annele Gregory, 2017 Sphinx Competition Robert Frederick Smith Prize winner and Sphinx Virtuosi member

Sphnx.org20: A new partnership with the Cleveland Institute of Music provides scholarships to students from less diverse communities.

Sphinx partners with Eugene Rogers to launch EXIGENCE, a professional vocal ensemble dedicated to promoting excellence and diversity through choral music within Black and Latino communities.

Our amazing Sphinx family drives everything we do.

How can you help?
- Make a personal gift now – consider a donation of $200 in honor of Sphinx’s 20th anniversary
- Hold a facebook fundraiser for Sphinx – as we approach the holidays, a facebook fundraiser is a great way to let your friends and family know that they can give to you by supporting Sphinx! (facebook.com/fundraisers)
- Give a donation as a gift to a music lover or activist in your life! We’ll send them a personal note and special Sphinx gift.
- Visit smile.amazon.com and select Sphinx Organization Inc. as your charity to donate a percentage of your Amazon purchases to Sphinx.

Donations can be made at sphinxmusic.org/donate or with the enclosed giving envelope.

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#SphinxStories

"If it wasn’t for Sphinx, I might still not be aware of my true passion for composing/songwriting.”
- Ana Lucía Galán, Sphinx Performance Academy alum and Sphinx MPower Artist Grant recipient

Did these short teasers make you curious to hear these artists’ full stories? Sign up for Sphinx’s e-mail list, or check sphinxmusic.org/20-years-2-million-stories throughout December!

"There are a handful of alums who can say they’ve been with Sphinx for all 20 years of its existence, and I’m extremely honored to be one of them.”
- Melissa White, Sphinx Competition alum, Sphinx Virtuosi member, Harlem Quartet founding member, and Sphinx MPower Artist Grant recipient
You are invited to register for Sphinx Connect 2018: The epicenter for artists and leaders in diversity.

This year’s convening, February 1-4 in Detroit, will welcome hundreds of musicians, industry leaders, educators, funders, diversity advocates, and more for a transformative conference filled with sessions, performances, and networking opportunities! Highlights include:

- Over 60 speakers from around the world
- A pre-conference workshop on teaching artistry with Eric Booth
- Sphinx Orchestral Partners Audition (SOPA), where musicians of color will audition for a panel representing several orchestras
- Opening plenary featuring Sphinx founder Aaron P. Dworkin
- Sphinx Artist Showcase, presenting performers to managers, presenters, and industry leaders
- The inaugural performances of EXIGENCE, a new vocal ensemble directed by Vaughan Williams and Beethoven’s timeless Grosse Fuge.

A unique element of the Sphinx Virtuosi tour is the outreach efforts. In addition to world-class concert performances, the artists also present school visits and community performances. These performances provide an amazing and personal educational opportunity and often a first exposure to classical music for students. Teachers and administrators from this year’s outreach locations shared that the students were truly inspired by connecting with Sphinx musicians:

"I wanted to thank Sphinx for [inviting] my eighth-grade students (and me!) to attend the Sphinx Virtuosi performance. It was an extraordinary evening, and we felt like the luckiest musicians in the world." - Emily

"It’s great to see the renewed energy...[which] only happens when the students see the Sphinx Virtuosi perform. They’re inspired to take on new challenges, and several of them have identified roles models from the stage they want to emulate..." - Steven

"You allowed me to first experience an orchestra live. And now I have someone closer to my age got a big opportunity and rocked at it." - Matthew

"It inspired me to be more serious in what I am learning and makes me want to practice more so I can grow as a musician every year." - Emily

Congratulations to the members of the Sphinx Virtuosi on this exciting tour, and many thanks to the partners and supporters who made this endeavor possible. If you are interested in booking the Sphinx Virtuosi for the 2018 Sphinx Virtuosi tour, please contact Stephanie Matthews at SMathews@SphinxMusic.org.

Sphinx was honored to be a part of two national conferences held in our hometown of Detroit: Independent Sector (IS) and Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA). These convenings brought together the nation’s top activists, policymakers, and leaders in philanthropy and the non-profit sector to discuss the work being done to increase and support diversity, equity, and inclusion within philanthropy and the non-profit fields. The Sphinx Virtuosi chamber ensemble along with violinst Hannah White and cellist Sterling Elliott performed for over 2,000 leaders in the arts and non-profit sector, allowing them to experience Sphinx’s mission firsthand.

Send us your news and performance updates: QuarterPlace@SphinxMusic.org

Impacting Communities Across America: 2017 Sphinx Virtuosi National Tour

The Sphinx Virtuosi completed their 10th National Tour on October 31st after visiting 26 cities! This dynamic string ensemble, comprised of the nation’s top Black and Latino musicians, received enthusiastic ovations and glowing reviews during their tour across the United States. In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Sphinx Organization, the Concert per Verdi program featured a collection of concert through the ages, showcasing tremendous variety in languages and styles. The tour included the newly commissioned Guardians of the Horizon: Concerto Grosso for Violin, Cello, and Strings, by award-winning composer Jimmy Lopez. This work was co-commissioned by the Sphinx Organization, with the support of Linda and Stuart Nelson, Carnegie Hall, and New York Symphony in honor of Sphinx’s 20th Anniversary Celebration. The Concert per Verdi program also featured Delights and Dances by Michael Abels, a three-movement work for string quartet and string orchestra (commissioned by Sphinx in 2007). Concerto Grosso by Vaughan Williams and Beethoven’s timeless Grosse Fuge.

Sphinx’s Overture program and a quartet of Sphinx Performance Academy students were featured in Chasing Light: Michelle Obama Through the Lens of a White House Photographer by Amanda Lucidon. The book includes photos from the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards of 2016, where Sphinx was an honoree and had a performance.

Overture alumna, Jordy Juarez, made her Orchestra Hall debut as a member of Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s Civic Youth Ensembles (CYE).

Cellist Evan Rowland-Seymour was selected as one of two students for the Cleveland Institute of Music’s inaugural Minority Artist Fellowship (MAF) program. Rowland-Seymour attended SPA at the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM) in the summer of 2017.

Vioinist Rosee Head was featured by WSRT-TV Syracuse as the Extraordinary Talent of the Week! Rowland-Seymour attended SPA at Roosevelt University in 2017.

Sphinx Virtuosi classes are underway for the 2017-2018 program at 12 elementary schools in Detroit and Flint, MI. So far this year, students have learned about instrument care and responsibility, fundamentals of position and tone production, and are already playing their first pieces of music!

The students had some words to share as well:

"I was very amazed about that girl that played the solo...I really look up to her." - almonds

"I am inspired by the bass players how good they sound. I learned there is a lot more to music than I thought." - Xavier

"My favorite part was the girl who won the Junior division...because someone closer to my age got a big opportunity and rocked at it." - Alisha

"You allowed me to first experience an orchestra live. And now I have a song that I will always remember called ‘Delights and Dances’.\" - Matthew

"It inspired me to be more serious in what I am learning and makes me want to practice more so I can grow as a musician every year." - Emily

Sphinx award-winning Young Artists featured in the 2017 national Sphinx Virtuosi Tour were:

- Naomi Grosse Fugue
- Matthew String Quartet
- Xavier Concerto
- Emily String Orchestra
- Steven Overture alumnus
- Emily String Orchestra

The 2017 national Sphinx Virtuosi Tour was made possible with the generous support of JPMorgan Chase & Co. with additional support from Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, Aetna, and National Endowment for the Arts/ArtWorks, and the Associated Chamber Music Players.

In-kind support provided by MAC Cosmetics.
Something to Ponder:

“The true beauty of music is that it connects people. It carries a message, and we, the musicians, are the messengers.”

-- Roy Ayers