Announcing the 2020 Recipients of the Sphinx Medals of Excellence and $50,000 Career Grant

The Sphinx Medal of Excellence is the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization, annually awarded to three classical artists of color who demonstrate artistic excellence, outstanding work ethic, a spirit of determination, and an ongoing commitment to leadership and their communities. Congratulations to the 2020 Medalists: Jessie Montgomery, composer & violin; Weston Sprott, trombone; and Davóne Tines, bass-baritone.

The 9th annual Sphinx Medals of Excellence will be bestowed at a private luncheon hosted by The Kennedy Center and The Aspen Institute, and honorees will be celebrated at a black-tie private dinner in Washington, D.C. Read more about this year’s medalists at SphinxMusic.org/sphinx-medals-of-excellence.

The 2020 Sphinx Medals of Excellence are generously underwritten by Fund II Foundation and William H. Carson, M.D.

Sphinx Venture Fund Empowers the Field to Lead Diversity Efforts

Over five years, Sphinx will invest $1.5 million to transform the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the arts with the Sphinx Venture Fund (SVF). Through competitive grants, SVF will catalyze initiatives designed to solve a challenge or an issue related to DE&I in the sphere of the performing arts, with an emphasis on classical music.

SVF aims to fund highly impactful programs affecting extensive and measurable positive change. A small number of proposals will be selected each year with an average grant size of $50,000 – $100,000. Potential projects will be identified by a National Recommendation Council (NRC) as well as through direct submissions. After consultation with the NRC and the Strategic Advisor, all final determinations of the SVF are made by Sphinx President, Afa S. Dworkin. Learn more or apply now at SphinxMusic.org/sphinx-venture-fund.

Applications due November 15, 2019.

Sphinx Venture Fund is made possible in part by Fund II Foundation.

A Ground-Breaking Summer for Sphinx’s Education Programs!

The Sphinx Performance Academy (SPA) celebrated its 15th year of programming, this year introducing a new partnership with The Juilliard School and including bass students for the first time in SPA’s history. In collaboration with the Curtis Institute of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, and The Juilliard School, SPA created a unique opportunity for a record 84 string players ages 11-17 to immerse themselves in the study of their instrument while broadening the scope of their musical knowledge through chamber music, chamber orchestra, and musical studies courses.

Students enjoyed guest artist masterclasses with renowned artists such as violinists Bella Hristova (soloist), Olga Kaler (soloist and pedagogue), and Kelly Hall-Tompkins (soloist and entrepreneur, recipient of Sphinx Medal of Excellence); violists Roberto Diaz (President Curtis Institute of Music), Stanley Konopka (Cleveland Orchestra), and Nokothula Ngwenyama (soloist, composer); cellists Richard Weiss (Cleveland Orchestra), Gabriel Cabezas (Astral Artist, recipient of Sphinx Medal of Excellence), and Astrid Schween (Juilliard String Quartet); and bassist Timothy Cobb (New York Philharmonic). In addition to this star-studded roster, students had unique opportunities to learn about creating a diverse career in music and the importance of giving back from Joseph Conyers (Philadelphia Orchestra, Project 440, recipient of Sphinx Medal of Excellence) and working through anxiety to achieve optimal performance with performance psychologist Noa Kageyama (The Juilliard School, Bulletproof Musician). SPA students took full advantage of their environments with trips to the Cleveland Orchestra and Cleveland Botanical Gardens, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Carnegie Hall!

This year’s SPA students performed with great success in their final recitals, and we are proud of the progress that each and every student made over the course of the summer. To learn more about SPA, please visit SphinxMusic.org/spphinx-performance-academy and be sure to follow the Sphinx Organization on Instagram (@sphinxorg) for all summer updates!

This July, nearly 40 students participated in Sphinx’s Overture Summer Camp at Gompers Elementary. This two-week, full-day camp offers a unique opportunity for Detroit violin students to participate in group and ensemble classes, private lessons, and additional enrichment activities. This summer, students participated in a bucket drum ensemble, African ballet, and created their own camp song. In addition, students visited Detroit’s MusicTown recording studio, where they learned about recording basics, beat-making, and voiceover work. Students also presented recitals at Beacon Park and at Gompers Elementary. We celebrate another successful camp session and look forward to welcoming our students back into the classroom in October!
A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I hope you are enjoying this season of change and reflection! With this newsletter, we are celebrating our summer successes and looking ahead to our quickly approaching fall programs.

This summer saw an expansion of our Sphinx Performance Academy (SPA) program and a banner year for our Sphinx Overture summer camp. In this newsletter, you will find a wrap-up of both programs including some of our favorite photos. We are inspired by our students, in awe of the teachers and staff who facilitate their learning and growth, and deeply grateful for the supporters and artistic partners who make our education programs possible!

Our annual Sphinx Virtuosi National Tour is always an eagerly anticipated highlight of the year for me. In the 2019/20 tour, 18 of the nation’s top Black and Latinx classical soloists – including alumni of many other Sphinx programs – will visit 14 cities for performances, residencies, and community outreach. I extend a sincere thank you to our lead sponsors, JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Robert F. Smith, for making it possible for us to bring Sphinx’s mission to so many diverse audiences and communities. One of the best parts of the tour is seeing our Sphinx family across the country, and having you introduce your networks to our mission! Please be sure to look over the tour schedule and find a performance near you; we look forward to seeing you!

Thank you, as always, for your friendship and support as we continue to transform lives through the power of diversity in the arts.

Warmly,

Afa

Afa Dworkin, Sphinx President & Artistic Director

FUNDER HIGHLIGHT

JPMorgan Chase & Co. has been a longtime champion of the Sphinx Virtuosi, with support dating back to the ensemble’s Carnegie Hall debut in 2004. Since becoming the lead corporate sponsor of the Sphinx Virtuosi tour in 2017, JPMorgan Chase & Co. has helped Sphinx to provide professional development and performance platforms to over 50 Black and Latinx classical musicians, develop new and diverse classical music audiences totaling over 50,000 in over 45 communities across the country, and connect with thousands more through social engagement and outreach activities. We are deeply grateful to JPMorgan Chase & Co. for this transformative partnership and their historic support of Sphinx’s mission to so many diverse audiences and communities. One of the best parts of the tour is seeing our Sphinx family across the country, and having you introduce your networks to our mission! Please be sure to look over the tour schedule and find a performance near you; we look forward to seeing you!

Thank you, as always, for your friendship and support as we continue to transform lives through the power of diversity in the arts.

Warmly,

Afa

Afa Dworkin, Sphinx President & Artistic Director

Performers, Arts Leaders & Admins: October Deadline Approaching Fast!

Apply now for these transformative Sphinx programs!

- Sphinx Competition
- Sphinx Orchestral Partners Auditions (SOPA)
- Sphinx LEAD
- SphinxConnect Fellowship
- Sphinx Tank

Apply for one or multiple programs at app.getacceptd.com/sphinxmusic

Learn more at SphinxMusic.org

Deadline: 11:59pm ET on October 15th, 2019

Sphinx Competition
Sphinx Virtuosi Tour Presenter
Sphinx Tank
Don’t Miss the Sphinx Virtuosi in a City Near You!

The 2019/20 Sphinx Virtuosi National Tour is the first to take place in two parts - Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 - allowing more audiences than ever to experience the diverse programming and electrifying artistry of the self-conducted orchestra.

The tour program, For Justice and Peace, immerses audiences in these themes as they appear in music throughout place and time. Repertoire includes a world premiere by Sphinx Competition Laureate Xavier Foley and works by Béla Bartok and Franz Schubert. Listeners will leave inspired to contemplate their own role, as well as that of the arts, in propelling peace and positivity.

The 2019/20 Sphinx Virtuosi National Tour is made possible with the generous support of JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Robert F. Smith, with additional support from Aetna and National Endowment for the Arts/Art Works.

Fall Tour 2019
09/29 2:00pm New World Center, Performance Hall; Miami Beach, FL
10/01 7:30pm University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Watson Hall; Winston-Salem, NC
10/04 7:30pm Civic Music Association, Hoyt Sherman Place; Des Moines, IA
10/06 3:00pm Peak Performances @ Montclair State University; Montclair, NJ
10/11 7:00pm Carnegie Hall, Stern Auditorium; New York, NY
10/13 1:30pm Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Boston, MA
10/14/8:00pm Cleveland Institute of Music; Cleveland, OH
10/15/7:30pm St. Michael’s in the Hills Church; Toledo, OH
10/18 8:00pm Williams Center for the Arts, Lafayette College; Easton, PA

Winter Tour 2020
02/21 7:30pm Museum of Fine Arts; St. Petersburg, FL
02/25-26 Residency Arts and Science Council; Charlotte, NC
02/28 8:00pm Library of Congress; Washington D.C.
03/01 3:00pm The Arts Partnership, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts; Saint Paul, MN
03/11 7:00pm Onstage Ogden, Peery’s Egyptian Theater; Ogden, UT

Collaborative Performances
04/02-04 Sphinx Virtuosi Join Minnesota Orchestra
05/02 7:00pm Members of Orpheus and Sphinx Virtuosi; Carnegie Hall
05/19-24 Menuhin Competition Richmond 2020 - Artist-In-Residence

Register for SphinxConnect 2020: Vision

The epicenter for artists and leaders in diversity, Feb. 6-8, 2020 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 70 speakers from around the world
◆ Sphinx Tank: Identifying the next great cultural entrepreneur, an innovative session showcasing emerging arts & cultural entrepreneurs of color as they “pitch” their projects to a panel of experts
◆ Sphinx Orchestral Partners Audition (SOPA), where musicians of color will audition for a panel representing several orchestras
◆ Opportunities to connect with new projects and organizations at the Expo Hall
◆ Master classes with Sphinx Competition jury members
◆ Several networking receptions

Visit SphinxConnect.org now to register!
SAVE THE DATE!

Sphinx Competition Finals Concert
See the Senior Division finalists perform with the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra and compete for the top $50,000 Robert Frederick Smith Prize!

Saturday, February 8, 2020 at 7:30pm
Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, Detroit, MI

Anthony McGill, one of the inaugural recipients of the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, was named artistic director of The Juilliard School’s Music Advancement Program.

Eduardo Rios, 2015 Sphinx Competition Junior Division 1st Place Laureate, was named First Assistant Concertmaster of Seattle Symphony.

Ifetayo Ali-Landing, 2017 Sphinx Competition 1st Place Laureate, performed as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Maestra Marin Alsop at Ravinia music festival.

In an exciting new partnership, Sphinx Virtuosi have joined the roster of MKI Management for bookings beginning in the 2020/21 season. This will include the 2020/21 Sphinx Virtuosi National Tour: Land of the Free, highlighting American composers including underrepresented voices.

Sphinx alumna and Sphinx Performance Academy faculty Jennifer Arnold was named Director of Artistic Planning and Orchestral Operations for The Richmond Symphony.

Sphinx Competition Laureate Santiago Cañón Valencia received 2nd Prize/Silver Medal and the Audience Award at the International Tchaikovsky Competition.

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

#SphinxStories

Elena Urioste and Melissa White won the top prize at the inaugural 2019 Sphinx Tank: Identifying the Next Great Cultural Entrepreneur! The $10,000 grant supported the launch of the Intermission App, the first digital resource to provide music, movement, and mindfulness tools for musicians of all ages and experience.

The app offers tools to strengthen the body, calm the mind, and link music to healthy movement and mindfulness whether you’re on the road, preparing for a big practice day, or about to walk onstage. Users can explore dozens of detailed, accessible videos that provide pre-rehearsal moves, stretches that target specific body parts, warm-ups on different instruments, and breathing exercises. Intermission App is available for iOS in the App Store.

“We are beyond excited to share some of the ideas we’ve learned from a decade of yoga practice with our music students, colleagues, and friends through the videos in our app! We’re so grateful for the opportunities that Sphinx has afforded Intermission — from a 2017 MPower grant to help get our program off the ground to the top prize at the inaugural Sphinx Tank which made the launch of the Intermission App possible — and we love that we can feel support and warmth from Sphinx in everything we do.”

Something to Ponder:
“Find the good. It’s all around you. Find it, showcase it, and you’ll start believing in it.”

-Jesse Owens