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## **Violinists Dominate Sphinx Competition**

**Gareth Johnson named 1<sup>st</sup> place Laureate at 13<sup>th</sup> annual Sphinx Competition  
presented by the DTE Energy Foundation**

(Detroit, MI) With a sold out crowd looking on, three young musicians demonstrated how their musical excellence would take one of them to stages across the country. Sunday's Sphinx Competition Finals Concert at Orchestra Hall was the exciting culmination of the **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Sphinx Competition presented by DTE Energy Foundation.**

In the end, it was only one who could be named First Place Laureate and it was **Gareth Johnson**, a 24-year old violinist from Wellington, Florida. His performance of the third movement of Saint Saëns Concerto for Violin in B Minor won him the top honors and a cash prize of \$10,000. Karla Hall, Vice President of the DTE Energy Foundation presented a trophy to Johnson on stage.

Second and third place honors went to Paul Laraia and John Sanderson respectively. Laraia is a 20-year old violist from Boston. Third place Laureate John Sanderson is a 19-year old violinist from Bloomington, Indiana.

Deidre Bounds, chair of the Board of Directors for the Sphinx Organization also announced the launch of the Erb Family Foundation Challenge, during which all new or increased gifts to the Sphinx Organization will be matched 2:1 by the Foundation. With this new support, Sphinx will be able to sustain programs throughout the entire year ahead.

The concert also featured the unique all Black and Latino Sphinx Symphony Orchestra and guest artists the Harlem Quartet, an ensemble comprising First-Place Laureates of the Sphinx Competition. The Harlem Quartet and Sphinx Symphony Orchestra presented the world premiere of *Urban Legends*, a Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra, by acclaimed composer Michael Abels at the Finals Concert. The Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, which includes professional musicians from around the country, performed under the direction of Michigan native Anthony Elliott.

During the Junior Division Honors Concert, held at Ann Arbor's Rackham Auditorium, Randall Goosby was named the First Place Junior Division Laureate. Goosby, a 13-year old violinist from Bartlett, Tennessee was awarded prizes and scholarships including opportunities for solo appearances with major orchestras, and a performance on NPR's *From the Top*.

The annual Sphinx Competition presented by DTE Energy Foundation for young Black and Latino string players has identified, rewarded, and promoted talented young musicians for over eleven years and awarded over \$1,000,000 in prizes and scholarships. Alumni of the competition have

performed as soloists with many of the nation's top orchestras including the Detroit Symphony, New York Philharmonic, National Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, and many others. The Finals Concert was recorded by Detroit Public Television for broadcast in HD, sponsored by Fifth Third Bank.

All 18 Sphinx Competition semi-finalists receive Sphinx Music Assistance Fund scholarships to help support their musical development, and are eligible for full scholarships to summer and higher education programs.

"This afternoon's concert was a thrilling conclusion to the competition. Sphinx has brought the sound of change to classical music where diversity plays a crucial role and fosters a culture that makes classical music accessible to all," said Aaron Dworkin, founder and president of the Sphinx Organization. "We look forward to seeing all of our talented semi-finalists and Competition winners in music schools and in orchestras across the country as they develop their musical careers."

During the competition, participants are offered educational and professional development activities with renowned musicians and music professionals, and benefit from mentoring by Sphinx's prestigious jury and Sphinx Symphony Orchestra members. The jury panel for the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Sphinx Competition Presented by DTE Energy Foundation was comprised of professional musicians from around the country including Atar Arad, Nokothula Ngwenyama, Sanford Allen, Joseph Conyers, Paul Katz, Joel Smirnoff and Jose Serebrier.

The Sphinx Organization was established in 1996 by Aaron Dworkin with a mission to increase Black and Latino participation in music schools, as professional musicians, as classical music audiences, to administer youth development initiatives in underserved communities through music education, and to promote the creation, performance, and preservation of works by Black & Latino composers. In addition to the Competition, the Sphinx Organization's educational programs reach over 35,000 students around the country.

The DTE Energy Foundation is the philanthropic arm of DTE Energy, continuing the legacy of community support and involvement of its principal operating subsidiaries, Detroit Edison and MichCon. The Foundation directs its contributions and involvement to support initiatives dedicated to developing the human and economic potential of the communities it serves. Grants are awarded under the foundation's "LEAD" guidelines: leadership, education, environment, achievement, development and diversity in the DTE Energy service territory, which includes southeast, western and northern Michigan. The DTE Energy Foundation is fully funded by the shareholders of DTE Energy.

**Media Only: For more information and to schedule interviews please contact Alison Piech of the Sphinx Organization at 313-877-9100 ext. 709.**

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