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Recent Alumni Pursue Advanced Degree Programs in Music



Nnamdi Odita-Honnah

Among the various ways we support Stanford's music students, we sometimes help them apply to advanced degree programs in music. We checked in with three of these students we worked with last year to see how they're doing. Flutist Nnamdi (Papa) Odita-Honnah has undertaken a Master of Music program in Flute Performance at the New England Conservatory. Mezzo-soprano Lorin Phillips is working toward the Master of Music degree with a focus on Musical Theatre Performance at Arizona State University. Pianist Kevin Lee Sun, who has taken a leave from his M.D. program to pursue a D.M.A. in Performance and Literature: Piano, is at Eastman School of Music.



Kevin Lee Sun

Kevin, Lorin, and Papa all speak with enthusiasm about their new programs and of feeling very lucky to be where they are. Nevertheless, they all must navigate some challenges specific to performance studies during a pandemic. "We're just very careful with a reservation system, viricidal keyboard wipes, and masks always," Kevin says of the practice rooms. "I use Zoom to teach [piano to undergraduates] and to take classes."

Vocalists and flutists face additional difficulties with performance right now with COVID restrictions, as voice and flute appear to be superspreaders of the



Lorin Phillips

virus. But Lorin says that when she's not working with prerecorded accompaniment, ASU is able to provide an innovative solution. "This setup involves singing in a practice room next door to a live pianist and connecting the sound between the two rooms with microphones and speakers. This avoids the lag issue that comes with rehearsing over Zoom. While it's not a perfect solution and there are limited time slots available, it's a creative resource that we're lucky to have."

Papa reports some rather awkward safety precautions studying flute. "The in-person classes I'm enrolled in—Wind Ensemble (a.k.a. Flute Ensemble) and Woodwind Orchestral Repertoire—adhere to strict COVID-19 safety guidelines. For instance, in-person classes abide by a 30-minute rule where after that time limit is reached, the entire class must move to another room and restart the 30-minute timer. No more than eight wind players may be playing in a room at a time, and they must be spaced six feet apart, wearing masks when not playing. We also must play with coverings on the bells of our instruments, and most frustratingly, flutists must play while wearing masks. I've gotten more or less used to these guidelines, but for our latest flute ensemble piece, I'm expected to play the bass flute while wearing some kind of covering, and it's very inconvenient."

Despite these challenges, all three students are carrying on with what they set out to do. Lorin is currently in rehearsals for an original cast recording and filmed reading for a new work written by ASU alumni. Kevin is energized about his teaching load of undergraduate pianists and his studies in music neuroscience. Of the latter, he says, "I'm especially interested in the predictive processing of music in autism—more generally, do autistic musicians process music any differently compared to neurotypical musicians? It's a logical and satisfying way for me to combine my medical—specifically psychiatric—training at Stanford with music." Papa says of flute lessons with Paula Robison, "Even

continued on next page

though my lessons take place over Zoom, I'm learning so much from her about performance and artistry. I'm extremely lucky to study with her here. In fact, I'm learning so much from every class I'm in, like my Flute Repertoire class where the principal flutist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Elizabeth Rowe, presents the most commonly asked for flute excerpts on audition lists, and different students perform those excerpts for the class weekly."

We're very happy to know that our students are doing so well in a challenging environment, and we look forward to the day when we can hear them perform live again—hopefully soon. — *Rowen Leigh*

Notes from the Interim Department of Music Chair



Stephen Hinton

WE LIVE IN "DIFFICULT," "CHALLENGING," "UNCERTAIN," and "unprecedented" times. Countless emails fill our inboxes describing the current situation in these terms. Yet such adjectives, though appropriate, scarcely do justice to the emotional *Sturm und Drang* that began in mid-March, with the Stanford campus in lockdown and all but essential staff required to work from home.

The challenges and difficulties that presented themselves are indeed unprecedented in number and severity. All instructors instantly had to adapt their classes for online delivery throughout spring quarter and beyond, while Stanford's administration assiduously prepared for the economic fallout expected from sheltering in place during the pandemic. Budgets had to be revised to accommodate an across-the-board 10% cut. In the Department of Music, where a committee of the current and former chairs worked with our finance officer, we quickly realized that the prescribed reductions to the base would be particularly painful because of an additional and quite substantial loss of revenue from cancelled concerts and studio lessons. In the event, after productive negotiations with the Deans, we managed to limit the damage to around 4% — not as painful as initially expected, but painful nonetheless.

The crisis in public health and the economy resulting from COVID-19 became compounded in May by widespread social unrest precipitated by the murder of George Floyd. As the ensuing national discussion about systemic anti-Black racism intensified across the country, Stanford embarked with focus and passion on a discussion not only about hopes for a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable academic community, but also about how to make such a community a reality. To that end, as part of a range of initiatives, President Tessier-Lavigne created new fellowships for the study of race and ethnicity, as well as positions for eminent scholars and researchers who work on the impact of race in America. At the Department of Music, we have

been exploring various avenues for our active participation in these exciting initiatives.

One especially bright spot — a story of necessity benefiting from invention and vice versa — has been the implementation of JackTrip, the open-source program developed by Chris Chafe and Juan-Pablo Cáceres at CCRMA that enables music-making over the Internet with professional-quality sound and minimal latency. Thanks to JackTrip being widely distributed, owing in part to material support from the Friends of Music, we have had notable success both with students taking lessons and with ensembles of a modest size, all of whom can now enjoy collaborative performance while maintaining social distance.

Let me conclude on a musical note. Music, it has frequently been said, captures human experience where words may seem inadequate. A well-known example that springs to mind in the current context is the opening of Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*: the purely instrumental and aptly titled "Representation of Chaos." The point of this arresting composition, which functions like a slow introduction in a symphony, is not just the musical rhetoric of desolation and pain, with meandering minor-mode harmonies, harsh dissonances, and unexpected cadential evasions. The broader point is how this musical representation of darkness and chaos prepares for the emergence of major-mode light. Such, by way of analogy, has been the experience of this year to date, full of discombobulating disorder, but also engendering hope for vital renewal and reengagement as campus opens back up. When my colleague Jarosław Kapuściński returns from his sabbatical next year to resume his leadership of the Department of Music, may words such as "unprecedented" and "challenging" apply, if they apply at all, in an entirely positive sense. — *Stephen Hinton, Interim Department Chair*

Early Music Singers Continues to Meet Using Zoom



Dr. William Mahrt

MANY STANFORD ENSEMBLES had to cease operations and gatherings in early March when the University responded to the general shutdown required in response to the coronavirus. Professor William Mahrt offered to continue Tuesday evening sessions for Stanford Early Music Singers that would in normal circumstances be in-person rehearsals. While the group is not singing together, it is learning

a great deal from video and audio sessions with Dr. Mahrt, using scores and sound recordings on YouTube. Each week, he selects several pieces that he discusses at length, either around a theme or by a single composer. The singers are learning more in depth about the music that they would not be able to learn while rehearsing it for concerts. A few examples of the sessions that have been held since March include:

- *Musica transalpina*: Bennet, Byrd, Weelkes, Wilbye
- Palestrina: *Sicut Cervus*; Palestrina & Lasso: *Super flumina Babylonis*
- Monteverdi: *Sestina*
- Victoria: *Versa est in luctum*; Victoria & Gesualdo: *O vos omnes*

These sessions are a wonderful alternative to not singing at all. The sessions are being recorded and will be archived by the Department of Music as a record of Dr. Mahr's knowledge and teaching skills. — *Miriam Palm*

News from the St. Lawrence String Quartet

IN MID-AUGUST, WE ENDED OUR forced hiatus and became a St. Lawrence String Quartet “pod.” It had been the longest we had ever gone without playing together and those first few rehearsals back were surreal and exhilarating. Getting together once again meant we could start thinking about digital concerts and digital teaching, two things we missed dearly, and we were thrilled when Stanford Live proposed that their fall season opening video feature us in Bing Concert Hall. The film shows us preparing and performing Haydn’s incredible string quartet Op. 76, No. 5 (one of our favorites) in the hall. When we can’t play for a live audience, having a high-quality video of a performance becomes incredibly important.

We are also getting creative when it comes to our chamber music classes in the Department of Music. Usually, we coach student ensembles of two to five musicians once a week and end the quarter with a concert featuring each group. This year, we as a quartet are creating a weekly video on a topic related to playing chamber music. We choose a piece that highlights the topic, discuss it, play examples, and then perform the whole composition. Afterwards, we have a discussion session with our students.

Final projects will be in the same vein, with each student choosing a topic and a piece of music to delve into for an engaging and thought-provoking presentation. Although we have hit pause on in-person concerts, we believe in the importance of making music accessible, and we hope this class will help our students experience the joy of exploring how to introduce, discuss, and celebrate a piece of music. — *St. Lawrence String Quartet*

The SLSQ Family Concert

On Wednesday, November 4, the St. Lawrence String Quartet presented their annual free Family Concert, a lighthearted explication of the workings of a string quartet illustrated by examples from Haydn and others. This year, the interactive concert was presented via Zoom to members of the local community including string students and teachers from PAUSD. The concert is co-sponsored by the Department of Music and Friends of Music at Stanford.

— *Friends of Music Board of Directors*

Strings and Music for Games: Jennifer Xiong



Jennifer Xiong

CURRENTLY A JUNIOR, Jennifer Xiong is a cellist and a Music major in the Composition concentration program. In her hometown of Madison, Wisconsin, she started playing cello in the sixth grade and was mostly self-taught until her junior year of high school when she was able to work to pay for private

lessons. She says that her first few experiences with composition came about after she found out about music notation software: “I started arranging various songs that I enjoyed for small ensembles that I was playing in with some classmates, and the process of re-arranging music for different instruments and coming up with different kinds of harmonies eventually helped me to transition into writing my own original pieces.”

At Stanford, Jennifer has sought a varied performance experience. She studies cello with Stephen Harrison and is a cellist with both the Stanford Symphony and the Philharmonia Orchestras, also serving as their Social Media & External Communications Chair. She has explored continuo and conducting and played in the orchestra for the department’s production of *One Touch of Venus* last year. Nevertheless, she has chosen to concentrate in Composition. “Beyond Stanford, I want to develop a career in writing music for film/video games/entertainment media in partnership with creative storytelling,” says Jennifer. “I feel super fortunate to be learning how to compose with a solid musical foundation at Stanford, in terms of writing music with intentional musical structures and uses of the material I learn in other music classes at Stanford. Ultimately, it’s where I feel like I can apply everything I’m learning in Stanford’s music program.”

When asked about her favorite composers, Jennifer said, “Mozart and Rimsky-Korsakov are my go-tos, especially their iconic compositions like the Queen of the Night’s aria in *The Magic Flute* or *Flight of the Bumblebee*.” For composers in the field she intends to pursue a career, she points to Mahito Yokota and Koji Kondo’s soundtrack works for Nintendo video games. “Overall, it’s hard to narrow it down; for me, the title of ‘favorite composer’ moves around a lot!”

Jennifer is very appreciative of the role Friends of Music play in her Stanford experience: “Huge thanks to the Friends of Music for making this possible.” — *Rowen Leigh*

Treasurer's Report

FOM'S PRIMARY SOURCES OF REVENUE continue to be endowment income and member donations. Each year, we distribute nearly all of that as scholarships to music students for lessons, musical tours, and SLSQ Seminar participation.

REVENUE: \$280,588

Endowment Income:
78% (\$219,019)

Scholarship Donations:
14% (\$40,025)

Membership Fees & Donations:
6% (\$15,565)

Paid Events:
2% (\$5,979)

EXPENSES: \$206,203

Lesson Scholarships:
92% (\$188,982)

Student Aid & Prizes:
5% (\$10,880)

Adult & Elementary School Programs:
1.5% (\$3,229)

Administrative Expenses:
1.5% (\$3,112)

NOTE: Because of the coronavirus, no money was spent on ensemble tours or for the St. Lawrence String Quartet Seminar this year.

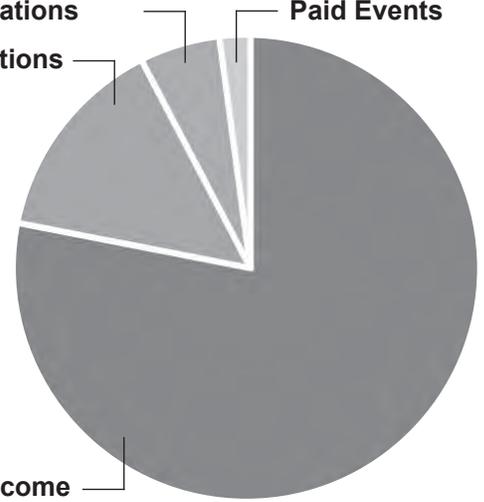
REVENUE

Membership Fees & Donations

Scholarship Donations

Paid Events

Endowment Income



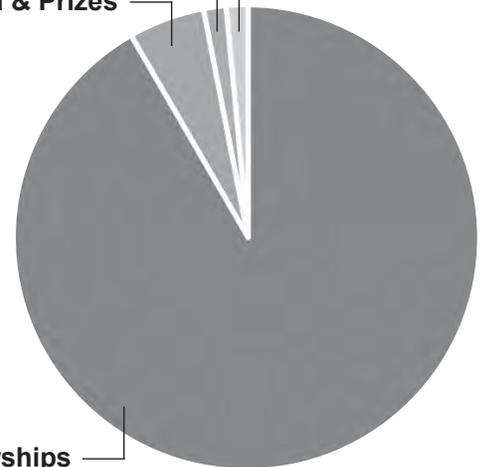
EXPENSES

Adult & Elementary School Programs

Student Aid & Prizes

Administrative Expenses

Lesson Scholarships



New Members Join the Friends of Music Board

MICHAEL C. MERCHANT JOINED THE BOARD in April 2020. Mr. Merchant is a Stanford graduate (B.S. and M.S. in Electrical Engineering, 1970) and was a member of the Stanford Band and Wind Ensemble. His career led him to found two technology companies where he designs and implements technical solutions. He lives in Palo Alto.

Melanie Goldstein Berenson joined the board in July 2020. Ms. Berenson is a Stanford graduate (B.A., Music, '12, *Phi Beta Kappa*; M.A., Music, Science, & Technology, '15; and M.B.A., '20). During her career at Stanford, she was named a Fulbright Scholar and a Mayfield fellow. She is a cellist and was the student member of the board as an undergrad.

Joss Saltzman is our new board student member. Mr. Saltzman earned his B.A. in Music Composition in 2020 and is now in the M.A. program in Music, Science and Technology, expecting his degree in 2023. — *Friends of Music Board of Directors*

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EXCITING NEWS INSIDE:

- Music Alumni Pursue Advanced Degree Programs
- Notes from the Interim Department of Music Chair
- St. Lawrence String Quartet News

Friends of Music Bylaws Revised

THIS PAST SUMMER, the board convened a small task force to review the current bylaws, whose latest version was dated 2008. The group met via Zoom and recommended several revisions to bring the written document into alignment with current practices. This revised document was ratified at the October 2020 board meeting. Among the changes are:

- Adjusted the minimum size of the board from 18 to 12 members
- Clarified processes for vacancies and leaves of absence
- Established four principal officers of the board: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer
- Allowed for these officers to make interim decisions between board meetings
- Eliminated the Executive Committee
- Clarified wording to allow for electronic meetings

These updated bylaws will help us move forward with greater precision in our operations.

— Friends of Music Board of Directors

Board Member Resignation

WE ARE SAD TO REPORT that Lynne Toribara has stepped down from the board. Lynne is a long-time member and we will miss her historical perspective on the Friends.



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