



TRANSCRIPT
Born Leader Podcast — Episode 6 BONUS
Ul James — Seamless Harmony

[MUSIC INTERLUDE]

Narration: Imagine leading a team of dozens of people, working together harmoniously, all at one time as a seamless body. Ulysses James, Maestro of the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association, does just that. In this bonus episode of the Born Leader podcast, we talk about some amazing opportunities he's had to lead orchestras in fantastic venues. And we learn how Ul pays it forward by giving emerging composers the chance to have their original work played by an orchestra—an opportunity to lead a team in something that is not only seamlessly harmonious, but a thing born of their own creativity. It's a perfect example of what we believe here at the Hypatian Institute—everyone is born to lead. We just have different paths towards realizing our passion, purpose and promise.

[MUSIC INTERLUDE]

Gaea: More recently, in the last few years you've been conducting the Tribute to Wounded Warriors. So, what does that mean to you as someone who loves music, and someone with a military background as a veteran . . . what does it mean to you to be conducting those concerts?

Ul: A friend of mine, who is an impresario, concocted these concerts and for a very good purpose. The biggest one was at the Kennedy Center. It was the biggest set of performers that has ever appeared in the Kennedy Center. Now, I don't know if that's true, but we did have about 200 voices, I think, and 120 musicians up there. So, it was pretty big. And . . . um . . . it was a way for him to, I think, build an extravagant production, but it's also a way to fill the hall. And then, it's a way to make money for a very needed cause.

Gaea: Mm-hmm.

Ul: Yeah. And I've conducted many, many things with him over the years . . . for probably 20 or 30 years. So, this particular one was different because it was such a big operation.

Gaea: Mmmm, mm-hmm.

Ul: So, it was a lot of fun to do, but it was also quite meaningful.

Gaea: Mm-hmm.

Ul: And I'm sure he's going to go back to that whenever he can. I'm not the impresario. I don't have time to . . .

Gaea: [LAUGHTER]

Ul: ...to build up something of that immensity, but he has quite adapted to it.

Gaea: Mm-hmm. Because he also did it at the Great Meadow Field.

Ul: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Gaea: And it turned into not just a concert, but a whole day of events, and some kind of baseball game...

Ul: You've got it. Yep. Yep. That's H. David Meyers.

[LAUGHTER]

Gaea: Wow.

Ul: Yeah. Yeah, we did it there, too. And...um...we had a nice crowd. And, we did put together a fairly...a very good little orchestra and played some good stuff.

Gaea: Those are big venues.

Ul: Yeah.

Gaea: The whole, you know...the Meadow Field...but the...you must have been in the Opera House, I guess, at the Kennedy Center?

Ul: The Concert Hall.

Gaea: The Concert Hall. And that's like a huge place.

[LAUGHTER]

Gaea: The monument for President Kennedy. And then, of course, a wonderful arts venue. So...

Ul: Yeah. I've done a number of concerts there with him over the years, and also in the Terrace Theater, too.

Gaea: Well, you also have a competition named after you — a composition competition. What prompted the orchestra to create that award?

Ul: Well, it was me...primarily. And...uh...I felt much of classical music that is performed is music that probably...is...the word I usually use is "Mendelssohn or prior". So, anything that goes in... Actually, for many people, anything that goes into the, say, the second quarter of the 20th Century is classical music. And, what follows it is contemporary, scary music.

Gaea: [LAUGHTER] Ah, okay.

Ul: Of course, I don't look at it that way at all. I find even musicians tend to have that kind of outlook depending upon who they are.

Gaea: Mm-hmm.

Ul: The younger ones are probably more open than the older ones. And I felt very strongly that the music we should be playing should be music written by live composers. One way to do that is to have a competition, so that people who write very good music have an opportunity to have their music played and heard. Most aspiring composers don't have an outlet for their music.

Gaea: Mm-hmm.

Ul: Or, if they do, their music is played once and never again. It's a very difficult problem because orchestras only have so much time, and if they're spending it all on music from the museum—and you have to do that to a certain extent, because people who support you want to hear that music—you end up with a problem. So, I decided to have a composition competition. And, uh, it's working out fairly well. In fact, very well. And the music we've played over a period of time has been very exciting. And the people that we've selected, uh, their pieces are being played elsewhere, as well. So I'm feeling pretty good about that. It's very difficult to pick out the best of the best...

Gaea: Mm-hmm.

Ul: ... and, um ... and, however, it's something I really look forward to doing.

Gaea: It sounds like a good time, because it's always a joy to be able to recognize people and to be able to hand over an award.

[LAUGHTER]

Ul: Well, the award is the performance.

Gaea: Right. Right. Right.

Ul: And it's a really...that's a big award when you consider you're going to have 70 people working on that music for seven weeks and...uh...performing it in a concert hall for what might be 400 people. Not a lot, but ... enough

Gaea: It's a good number.

Ul: A good number, yeah.

Gaea: I've been to one of those performances. It was fantastic, and there was a talk with the conductor beforehand, with the composer. And, um, it was, it was a very wonderful performance.

UI: Well, thanks. We have a good time. The people in the orchestra are just fabulous people.

[MUSIC INTERLUDE]

Narration: I want to thank Ulysses James, Maestro of the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association, for speaking with us about sharing music with the public for the benefit of others and about cultivating new music leaders. If you want to learn more about how UI creates seamless harmony, listen to the last Born Leader episode in which we speak about creating a culture of respect and excellence. And, to find out more about the orchestra, go to www.WMPAmusic.org.

Before we wrap up, I'm excited to share that the application period for the Hypatian Institute's 2018 College Fellowship program begins August 18 and closes December 1. The Fellowship provides an invaluable opportunity to build your potential, develop an asset-based professional brand, and gain the tools to construct and leverage a high-value network. College Fellows receive coaching, mentoring and resources valued at \$3500, plus modest financial support through the Fellows Fund. We seek high potential first and second year students with a level of academic success that may not reflect their potential. Participation is free, but Fellows must commit to attending monthly meetings, participating in monthly one-on-one coaching sessions, and engaging in a mentoring relationship. Keep a look out for the application in the next few weeks.

That's it for this bonus episode of Born Leader. Thank you to Therese Arkenberg, who provides assistance on the business side of this venture. And thank you for listening. We'd love to hear from you in the comments section or on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

In the next episode of *Born Leader*, we'll speak with Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, a retired Major General, the first female and nurse to command a medical clinic, and the first African American to be promoted to General Officer in the National Guard.

If you want to learn more about Ulysses James or other guests on the Born Leader podcast, visit HypatianInstitute.org. That's H-Y-P-A-T-I-A-N institute dot O-R-G. Or follow us on Twitter at Hypatian I-N-S-T. Talk to you next time on Born Leader from the Hypatian Institute.

[MUSIC INTERLUDE]