Announcing the 2021 Sphinx Competition Semi-Finalists!

Presented by DTE Foundation
The Sphinx Organization, in partnership with the DTE Energy Foundation announces the 18 semi-finalists of the 24th Annual Sphinx Competition. Normally held annually in Detroit, the Final Rounds of the Sphinx Competition will take place virtually in 2021. Congratulations to the Junior Division (ages 17 and under) and Senior Division (ages 18-30) semi-finalists!

Honors Concert:
Friday, January 29th at 12pm ET (Live-Streamed)
Junior Division finalists compete for the top $10,000 prize

Finals Concert:
Saturday, January 30th at 7:30pm ET (Live-Streamed)
Senior Division finalists compete for the top $50,000 Robert Frederick Smith prize and solo appearances with major orchestras.

For more information visit: www.SphinxMusic.org/sphinx-competition

JUNIOR DIVISION

Ian Barnett, violin
Key Biscayne, FL
Teacher: Elizabeth Faidley

Isabela Díaz, violin
Miami, FL
Teacher: Jose A. Guibert

Gabriella Foster, violin
Nesconset, NY
Teacher: Ann Setzer

Kearston Gonzales, violin
Hampton, VA
Teacher: Chloé Kiffer

Brandon Leonard, cello
Stone Mountain, GA
Teacher: Karen Freer

Jonathan Oksemiluk, violin
Mesa, AZ
Teacher: Jing Zeng

Amaryn Olmeda, violin
Looma, CA
Teachers: Simon James, Ian Swensen

Dillon P. Scott, viola
Landsdale, PA
Teacher: Adriana Linares

George T.A. Wolfe-McGuire, cello
Amityville, NY
Teacher: Fred Sherry

Paul Aguilar, violin
Houston, TX
Teacher: Paul Cantor

Quenton Xavier Blache, cello
Winston-Salem, NC
Teacher: Andrew Shulman

Kebra-Seyoun Charles, bass
Miami, FL
Teacher: Joseph Conyers

Maïthéna Girault, violin
Montreal, QC, Canada
Teacher: Lucie Robert

Christian Gray, bass
Winston-Salem, NC
Teachers: Ed Barker, Paul Ellison

Mikel Rollet, viola
Boca Raton, FL
Teacher: Heidi Castelman, Hsin-yun Hsuan

Amaryn Olmeda, violin
Looma, CA
Teachers: Simon James, Ian Swensen

Andres Vela, bass
Edinburg, TX
Teacher: Timothy Pitts

Luiz Fernando Venturelli, cello
Praia Grande - São Paulo, Brazil
Teacher: Hans Jørn Jensen

SENIOR DIVISION

Samuel Abraham Vargas
Teixeira, violin
Anaura, Venezuela
Teacher: Sergio Schwartz

Kevin Kennedy
A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2020, the word that comes to mind is resilience. The catalyzing events of this past spring and summer gave way to transformative leadership on behalf of our artists and leaders. Today, the value of resilience cannot be overlooked.

I invite you to join us in reflection on the many moments we have shared and celebrated during this unconventional year. From reimagining our education programming in an interactive online format, hosting four Sphinx LEAD retreats, quadrupling the reach of our orchestra training initiatives, and sharing our inaugural virtual gala “Lift Ev’ry Voice” with more than 15,000 in audiences, we were able to transform countless lives. Looking ahead to 2021, we are excited to work with our community to build a dynamic platform for critical conversations at SphinxConnect and Sphinx Competition. The theme we chose this year is Unity, which we hope inspires our friends around the world to join us in our collective work toward a more just society.

None of Sphinx’s past or present successes would be possible without the outstanding advocacy from each of you. With your support, we will continue to empower the essential voices of artists and leaders who shape our field’s vibrant landscape.

Wishing each of you a joyous and prosperous season and a happy New Year!

Warmly,

Afa
Afa S. Dworkin, Sphinx President & Artistic Director

FUNDER HIGHLIGHT

The DTE Energy Foundation has been a longtime champion of the Sphinx Competition, first presenting our flagship program in 2007. Since becoming the presenting sponsor of the Sphinx Competition, the DTE Energy Foundation has helped Sphinx to provide educational development and performance platforms to over 200 Black and Latinx classical musicians, disburse over $1M in awards and scholarships, develop new and diverse classical music audiences through live and broadcast performances, and connect with thousands more through social engagement and outreach activities. We are deeply grateful to the DTE Energy Foundation and the advocacy of Sphinx board member, Lynette Dowler for this transformative partnership.
Join the Musical Chairs Family!

Support the 24th annual Sphinx Competition by sponsoring a musician in the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra. This unique all Black and Latinx ensemble comes together annually for the Competition, and is comprised of top orchestra musicians from around the country, many of whom are alumni of Sphinx programs.

Due to the ongoing impact of the global pandemic, this year’s Competition will take place virtually, with orchestra members continuing to offer mentorship to finalists and performing during the Junior Division Honors Concert on Friday, January 29, 2021, at 12:00pm ET and the Senior Division Finals Concert on Saturday, January 30, 2021, at 7:30pm ET.

To learn more and to secure your sponsorship today, please contact Ashleigh Dandridge at Ashleigh@SphinxMusic.org or 888-404-7073 x713.

$750 Co-Sponsor a Chair
$1,500 Sponsor a Chair
$2,500 Sponsor a Principal Chair
$5,000 Sponsor a Section

Becoming a Musical Chairs sponsor is a direct way for you to connect your passion and donation! Sponsors have the unique opportunity to name a chair(s)/section with your preferred recognition or in honor of a loved one.

"Words cannot express how life changing and important this event is in the lives of young musicians and the impact that it makes on future generations of string players. This Competition enables people of all ages to believe that the language of music can truly transcend the barriers of race, color and creed. It allows us to see the beauty of music in its purest form."

-- Mariana Green-Hill
Sphinx Symphony Orchestra member
Thank You for Helping Us Lift Every Voice for a More Just and Equitable Future

On October 15, Sphinx hosted our inaugural virtual gala, Lift Ev’ry Voice.

We are grateful to everyone who shared this online experience with Sphinx and our artists. With over 15,000 viewers worldwide, this remarkable evening allowed us all to witness firsthand Sphinx’s mission of transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts. With your support and advocacy, we were able to exceed our goal of $250,000 to benefit Sphinx’s programs at the intersection of the arts and social justice!

Lift Ev’ry Voice was made possible with the generous support of Bank of America and Robert F. Smith.

We look forward to seeing you in 2021!

Pivot 2020

This spring and summer, we were able to shift gears through the support, advocacy, and resilience of our community and pivot our programming from in-person to virtual during these challenging times.

70+
Sphinx alumni received funding as part of Sphinx Artist Fund, Match Project, and MPower

300+
private online lessons

94
artists served through the National Alliance for Audition Support online intensive

$120K
awarded through the Sphinx Artist Fund, Match Project, and MPower

$20K
invested in technology upgrades to support online learning

136
industry speakers participated in Sphinx’s virtual LEAD retreats
Make a Difference Today

The Sphinx Organization transforms lives through the power of diversity in the arts. When you contribute to Sphinx’s programs, you can put a violin in the hands of an elementary student for the first time, provide a once-in-a-lifetime performance opportunity to an emerging musician, and more.

It takes integrity, passion, commitment, respect, and community to successfully execute programming that reaches over 100,000 students and artists.

A gift of any size has an incredible impact on our ability to serve our community and strengthens the collective voice of our artists, students, alumni, and leaders who are changing the face of the field.

Use the enclosed giving envelope to make a donation today.

“I wanted to say thank you for supporting Sphinx. Most recently the Sphinx Artist Fund came at a time when it was difficult to continue a creative life [...] It was great to be able to hold deep conversations about some of these topics and to receive support from the Sphinx family during these challenging times. Thank you.”

Celia Hatton
Viola, Sphinx Virtuosi
Register Now for SphinxConnect 2021: UNITY will offer a dynamic, engaging virtual experience Jan. 28-30, 2021. While we are disappointed not to welcome our community to Detroit this year due to the pandemic, we look forward to engaging with musicians, industry leaders, educators, funders, diversity advocates, administrators, and more online! We hope to eliminate as many barriers to virtual attendance as possible, including SphinxConnect Fellowship support that provides funding towards personal internet costs. Register now to be a part of the inaugural online audience as we unite to celebrate and empower diversity in music!

For more information, including a link to register, visit www.SphinxConnect.org

Sphinx Venture Fund Recipients Announced

Sphinx is excited to announce the 2021 Sphinx Venture Fund recipients: these exciting projects and initiatives will address issues related to DE&I in classical music.

**Scoring for Equity in Opera** is poised to mightily advance the opera art form’s understanding and approach to diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as position the Black Opera Alliance as a leader in the broader performing arts sector vis-à-vis substantive change and accountability in the spheres of racial equity and social justice.

**The Institute for Composer Diversity Database Expansion and Community Impact Initiative:** A project that will work to create a more diverse and inclusive musical landscape. Through an expansion of the current ICD databases to include more works by Black and Latinx composers, ICD will work with partner organizations worldwide to create more diverse and inclusive musical experiences.

**Celebrate Diversity in String Music: A Graded Anthology of Works for Solo and Ensemble by Black and Latinx Composers:** The University of Tennessee School of Music seeks to address the significant disparities of representation in the pedagogical repertoire of Western Classical Music by creating and distributing graded anthologies of string repertoire for solo and ensemble settings. These volumes will celebrate Black and Latinx composers with the aim of inspiring young musicians who might not currently see a place for themselves in classical music.

**Rising Sun Recordings:** Curated by renowned pianist and producer Lara Downes in collaboration with a roster of leading American artists, Rising Sun Recordings will release more than 200 years of never-before-recorded music by Black composers. This extensive series will radically reframe the history of classical music by embracing the true diversity of its origins and expanding the inclusivity of its future, “facing the rising sun of our new day begun”

More information on the 2021 recipients may be found at www.SphinxVentureFund.org.
The Sphinx Performance Academy (SPA) is a full-scholarship intensive summer chamber music and solo performance program for string players ages 11-17. As a program with a primary focus on cultural diversity, SPA seeks to actively recruit and engage students from cultural backgrounds that are underrepresented in the field of classical music. The SPA curriculum includes an intensive schedule of lessons and coaching in addition to masterclasses, recitals, career enrichment sessions, and mentorship tailored for each student.

Sphinx is thrilled to collaborate with the Curtis Institute of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, and The Juilliard School for our summer 2021 programming!

To apply, please visit: app.getacceptd.com/sphinxmusic
Applications due February 9, 2021!

To learn more, please visit: www.SphinxMusic.org/sphinx-performance-academy


Sphinx Competition winner Gabriel Martins is one of the Grand Prize Winners of the Concert Artists Guild Competition.

Decca Classics has signed 24-year-old Sphinx Competition Laureate Randall Goosby.

Sphinx Medals of Excellence alumna Gabriela Lena Frank received the Heinz Award for Arts and Humanities.

Colburn School and the Sphinx Organization are forming a partnership to engage, develop, and empower young artists of color on the west coast.
Something to Ponder:
“Where words fail, music speaks.”
—Hans Christian Anderson

Q&A with Samantha Crawford


Quarter Note: Do you have a favorite Sphinx memory?

Samantha: My favorite memory has to be my final quartet performance at SPA. Even though the moment was bittersweet, it felt as if I was finally able to give thanks to a program that invested so much time and energy into me.

QN: Has there recently been anything that has inspired your playing/performing?

SC: In the era of social distancing, it’s easy to feel emotionally isolated from other people, but one thing that has recently inspired my playing/performing is the adaptations musicians are having to make due to the virus. I’m now having to find new ways to emote and communicate with my instrument through Zoom or a camcorder rather than straight to an audience.

QN: What has been your experience learning to play the William Frye violin and have there been any challenges?

SC: My experience in learning to play this violin has certainly been one of the most exciting and rewarding events of my life. This is the first instrument that feels as if it is an extension of my own body rather than merely an inanimate object.

To learn more about SPA, visit: www.SphinxMusic.org/sphinx-performance-academy