



Sphinx Virtuosi

Afa Dworkin

Artistic Director

Sunday Afternoon, October 29, 2017 at 4:00
Rackham Auditorium
Ann Arbor

15th Performance of the 139th Annual Season
55th Annual Chamber Arts Series

This afternoon's performance is sponsored by Michigan Medicine.

Media partnership provided by Ann Arbor's 107one, WGTE 91.3 FM, and WRCJ 90.9 FM.

The Sphinx Virtuosi national tour is made possible with the generous support of JPMorgan Chase & Co. with additional support from Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, Aetna, and National Endowment for the Arts/Art Works. In-kind support provided by MAC Cosmetics.

The Sphinx Virtuosi appear by arrangement with California Artists Management.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

PROGRAM

Concerti per Venti

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Concerto Grosso for String Orchestra

Intrada
Burlesca Ostinata
Sarabande
Scherzo
March and Reprise

Ludwig van Beethoven

Grosse Fuge in B-flat Major, Op. 133

Antonio Vivaldi

Concerto for Violin and Cello in B-flat Major, RV 547

Allegro
Andante
Allegro Molto

Annelle Gregory, *violin*; Thomas Mesa, *cello*

Intermission

Jimmy López

Guardian of the Horizon: Concerto Grosso for Violin, Cello, and Strings

Riddle
Crossing the Threshold
Into the Effulgent Light

Adé Williams, *violin*; Gabriel Cabezas, *cello*

Michael Abels

Delights and Dances

Rainel Joubert, *violin I*; Melissa White, *violin II*; Celia Hatton, *viola*;
Thomas Mesa, *cello*

CONCERTO GROSSO FOR STRING ORCHESTRA (1950)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born October 12, 1872 in Down Ampney, England

Died August 26, 1958 in London

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS concert.

Snapshots of History...In 1950:

- The Korean War begins
- Charles M. Schulz's comic strip *Peanuts* is first published in US newspapers
- The Mattachine Society is founded in Los Angeles as the first gay liberation organization

After a long, dreary period in England's music history, a new school of interesting nationalist composers burgeoned in the early years of the 20th century. Vaughan Williams, the greatest of these composers, had a rigorous musical education; he studied in Berlin with Max Bruch and in Paris with Ravel. This work's rhythmic difficulties are daunting; some claim they have caused the work to be rarely performed. Overall, the work contains good spirits and humor. The five movements are not unlike a Tchaikovsky serenade, with a reprise at the end of the opening music. The first movement, "Intrada" (Introduction), is a sonorous slow-paced *largo* with a dramatic theme. It runs into the "Burlesca Ostinata," an amusing, sprightly movement based on an "obstinately" repeated figure at a moderately fast pace, *allegro moderato*. Next comes the central "Sarabande," a dignified old slow dance, and then an energetic, lyrical, witty "Scherzo" in the rhythm and tempo of a fast waltz (*allegro*). At the end, a "March," lively and syncopated, precedes a reprise of the "Intrada."

GROSSE FUGE IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 133 (1826)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Budapest String Quartet; January 1950 in Rackham Auditorium.

Snapshots of History...In 1826:

- Samuel Morey patents an internal combustion engine
- The first railway tunnel is built en route between Liverpool and Manchester in England
- Congress gives Fort Shelby, a military fort central to the War of 1812, to the city of Detroit, and it is dismantled the following year

This gigantic movement is one of the most fiercely powerful pieces and forceful expressions of Beethoven's music. This masterpiece is a magnificent exploration of fugal writing: the structure is an important part of the weighty emotional charge of the music, not just its vehicle. Its structure is one of the chief features that makes the *Grosse Fuge* extraordinary and important among Beethoven's last incomparable masterpieces.

The *Grosse Fuge*'s intricacy and greatness allow the listener to hear it in several different ways. It is an introduction followed by a long fugue, or by a series of fugues. It is a fugal theme with variations, each, in turn, built as a series of variations. It is also a large-scale sonata form movement, in which each of the principal components is a fugue. It is even a cyclical work of four movements condensed into one: introduction, *allegro*, slow movement, and finale, each part except the first a fugue.

CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND CELLO IN B-FLAT MAJOR, RV 547

Antonio Vivaldi

Born March 4, 1678 in Venice, Italy

Died July 28, 1741 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Virtuosi di Roma; March 1956 in Hill Auditorium.

Vivaldi's *Concerto for Violin and Cello*, an example of a *concerto grosso*, is a spirited dialogue for the two solo instruments as colleagues and rivals for the spotlight. The first movement, "Allegro moderato," opens energetically, with strong rhythms and straightforward ideas. The soloists develop a musical idea with a canonic imitation with the cello presenting a form of the ascending scale/descending *arpeggio*, and the violin playing the same music two octaves higher. The first idea is a descending *arpeggio* and the other a quickly ascending scale. The music develops harmonically, with great beauty. Vivaldi uses *ritornello* form in which the orchestral theme alternates with solo episodes in the fast outer movements. The second movement, a sensitive "Andante," is short, with the orchestra playing a supporting role. The soloists showcase their imitative technique as they exchange calm and peaceful phrases. In the final movement, "Allegro molto," the orchestral rhythm displays Vivaldi's humor; the two instrumental soloists have offbeat accents and alternate virtuosic sections, sharing involved passagework between them.

GUARDIAN OF THE HORIZON: CONCERTO GROSSO FOR VIOLIN, CELLO, AND STRINGS (2017)

Jimmy López

Born October 21, 1978 in Lima, Peru

Guardian of the Horizon: Concerto Grosso for Violin, Cello, and Strings, was commissioned by the Sphinx Organization, with the support of Linda and Stuart Nelson, Carnegie Hall, and New World Center in honor of Sphinx's 20th anniversary celebration. The composer writes:

Guardian of the Horizon is a metaphor for Sphinx, which is associated with strength, wisdom, and resilience. It seemed to me like the most logical choice, albeit the most challenging, but as I was about to embark on the composition of this piece, tragedy struck me in a way which turned this into one of, if not the most personal pieces I have written to date. My father, Javier, a staunch supporter of my music since my early childhood, and the most loving and generous man one could ask for a father, passed away on December 4, 2016. In light of this enormous loss, the figure of the Sphinx gained an even greater significance. I began to think of Greek mythology and Oedipus (hence the title of the first movement) but then I started to think of it the way ancient Egyptians did, as a manifestation of Hathor, Goddess of birth and death, or as "Horus in the Horizon," guarding the rising and setting sun, and finally, as holding the keys to the gates of wisdom. In my work, the Sphinx guards the passage to the afterlife, but the aspiring soul must first answer a "Riddle," and only

then can it be allowed into "Crossing the Threshold." As I got to work, it felt more and more like I was writing a companion piece for my father's transcendental journey, a journey that we will all have to undertake someday. This piece is a labor of love. Few things in life have the power to touch us so deeply; the loss of a parent being one of them. But this piece is also meant to celebrate life, the life and talent of those young artists whom you will see on stage, because they represent the best and brightest, regardless of race or color. We must remember that no matter how dark the times may seem, our path will always lead us "Into the Effulgent Light."

DELIGHTS AND DANCES (2007)

Michael Abels

Born October 8, 1962 in Phoenix, Arizona

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS concert.

Snapshot of History...In 2007:

- North Korea agrees to shut down its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon by April as a first step towards complete denuclearization
- Bulgaria and Romania join the European Union
- Former Vice President Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

Michael Abels, an African-American composer best known for combining classical music with African-American jazz, blues, bluegrass, and ethnic genres, has gained widespread recognition for his orchestral music. *Delights and Dances*, commissioned by Sphinx, captivates listeners with witty, soulful, and infectiously rhythmic music. A *New York Times* review described the piece as “an energetic arrangement...which incorporates jazz, blues, bluegrass, and Latin dance elements.” *Delights and Dances* features quickly moving chord sequences and 16th-note runs for the solo quartet, which are rhythmically varied by the insertion of triplet patterns that relax and slow down the pace. The introductory section begins slowly, *largo, molto rubato*, with rhythmic freedom. The opening passage for solo cello sounds almost like a cadenza, then the solo viola plays the cello’s ascending motive, and the two play a brief duet enjoyed by the two solo violins. The orchestra enters, *pizzicato*, with short, detached, syncopated patterns. This section sounds like blues, but is

very rhythmic and has an optimistic feel. Each player in the solo group plays its own riff. The final section, “Bluegrassy,” begins with a solo viola theme; soon all four soloists join in a spirited hoedown. Finally, the solo quartet and the orchestral strings play together for the spirited conclusion.

Program notes compiled by Susan Halpern, with contributions by Afa S. Dworkin, president and artistic director of The Sphinx Organization.

ARTISTS

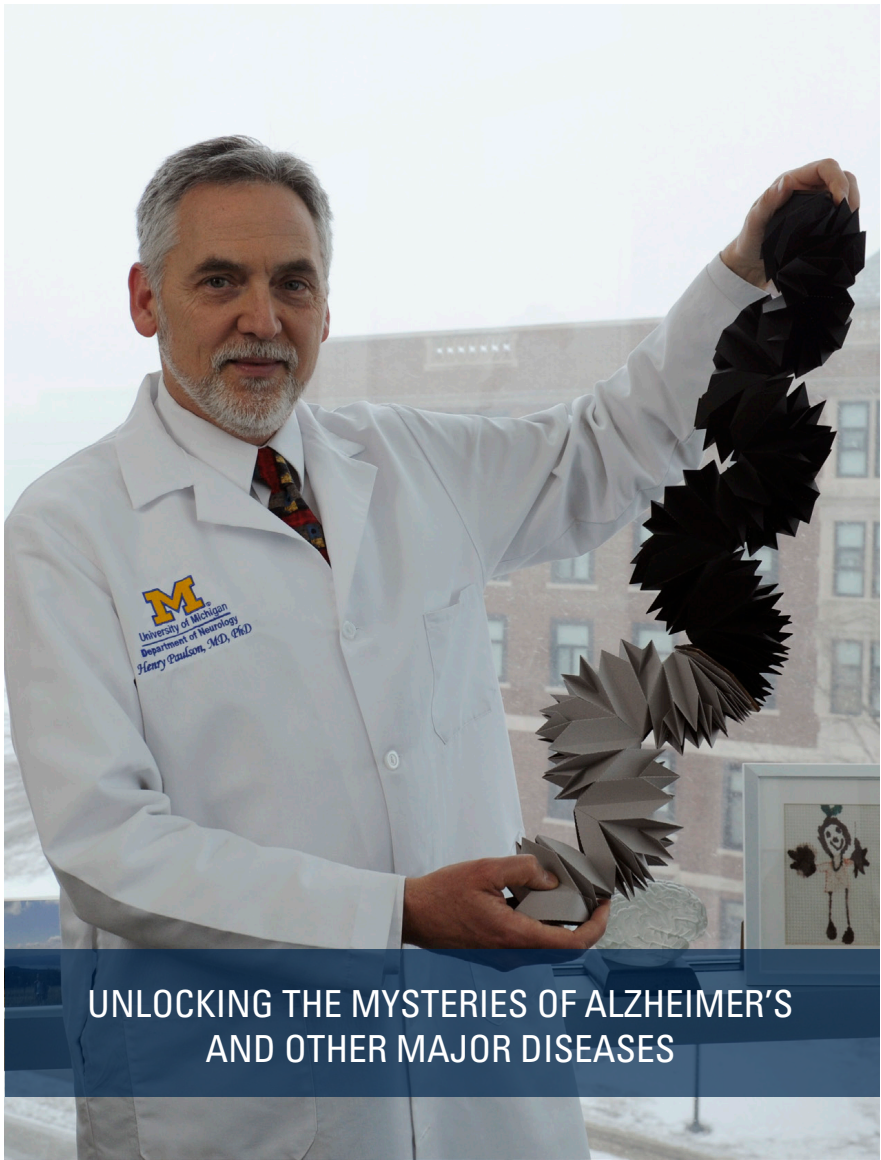
The **Sphinx Virtuosi** is one of the nation's most dynamic professional chamber orchestras. Comprised of 18 of the nation's top Black and Latino classical soloists, these alumni of the internationally renowned Sphinx Competition come together each fall as cultural ambassadors to reach new audiences. This unique ensemble earned rave reviews from the *New York Times* during its highly acclaimed debut at Carnegie Hall in December 2004. Allan Kozinn described their performance as "first-rate in every way" and "the ensemble produced a more beautiful, precise, and carefully shaped sound than some fully professional orchestras that come through Carnegie Hall in the course of the year."

The Sphinx Virtuosi have returned to Carnegie Hall annually since 2006 performing to sold-out halls and earning outstanding reviews from the *New York Times* each year. At once a bridge between minority communities and the classical music establishment, the Sphinx Virtuosi continue to garner critical acclaim during their annual national tours to many of the leading venues around the country.

JPMorgan Chase has been a sponsor of the Sphinx Organization for more than 15 years and is proud to be the lead corporate sponsor of the 2017 Sphinx Virtuosi national tour.

UMS ARCHIVES

UMS has a long history with the Sphinx Organization which goes back to its founding in 1996. Over the years, UMS has co-presented the Sphinx Chamber Orchestra with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in Detroit's Orchestra Hall, collaborated on annual youth performances tied to the annual Sphinx Competition, showcased Sphinx chamber ensembles such as the Sphinx Quartet at the 2005 Ford Honors Program celebrating the Guarneri Quartet, and shared a remarkable number of board leaders and volunteers. This afternoon's performance marks the **Sphinx Virtuosi's** second performance under UMS auspices, following its UMS debut in September 2015 at Rackham Auditorium.



UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF ALZHEIMER'S AND OTHER MAJOR DISEASES



Drs. Henry Paulson and Andrew Lieberman have formed a unique coalition of more than 50 clinicians and scientists studying protein-folding disorders as a group, which holds the promise to establish new ways to prevent and treat these devastating conditions.

SPHINX VIRTUOSI

Violin I

Jessie Montgomery, *Concertmaster*
Annelle Gregory
Melissa White
Meredith Riley

Violin II

Rainel Joubert, *Principal*
Scott Jackson*
Adé Williams
Sheena Gutierrez

Viola

Celia Hatton, *Principal*
Robert Switala*
Drew Forde
Caitlin Adamson

Cello

Thomas Mesa, *Principal*
Gabriel Cabezas+
Erica Snowden*
Marza Wilks

Double Bass

Patricia Silva Weitzel, *Principal*
Benjamin Harris

* *Principal on Abels*
+ *Principal on Vivaldi*

Additional support for the Sphinx Virtuosi
provided by Mercedes-Benz Financial Services,
Aetna, and MAC Cosmetics.

TONIGHT'S VICTOR FOR UMS:



Michigan Medicine

Supporter of this afternoon's performance by the Sphinx Virtuosi.

MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 11/7 China NCPA Orchestra
- 11/12 The Knights
- 11/17–19 New York Philharmonic

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 11/1 UMS 101: Zakir Hussain and Dave Holland
(Pioneer High School, 601 W. Stadium Boulevard, 5:30 pm)
Paid registration required; please visit bit.ly/UMSClasses to register.
- 11/7 Panel: Unraveling the Arab Spring: Egypt Since 2011, with
Bassem Youssef
(Weiser Hall 1010, 500 Church Street, 4:00 pm)
- 11/12 EXCEL Brunch with The Knights: Crossing Boundaries
to Compelling Programming
(EXCEL Lab, 1279 Moore Building, 1100 Baits Drive, 11:00 am)
- 11/18 UMS 101: New York Philharmonic Young People's Concert
(Pioneer High School, 601 W. Stadium Boulevard, 12 noon)
Paid registration required; please visit bit.ly/UMSClasses to register.

Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.