

**PEAK**  
PERFORMANCES

19|20  
SEASON

THE HEIGHTS OF IMAGINATION

Peak Debut!

Sphinx Virtuosi

# *For Justice and Peace*

Photo by Kevin Kennedy



October 6, 2019 • 3:00pm

Alexander Kasser Theater

Arts + Cultural  
Programming



MONTCLAIR STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Dr. Susan A. Cole, President  
Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts  
Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts + Cultural Programming

**Peak Debut!**

**Sphinx Virtuosi**  
***For Justice and Peace***

**Sphinx Virtuosi**

Violin I **Patricia Quintero Garcia,\*\* Clayton Penrose-Whitmore,**  
**Rubén Rengel,\*\* Chelsea Sharpe**

Violin II **Brendon Elliott, Alex Gonzalez,\* Allison Lovera, Emile Mettenbrink\***

Viola **Caleb Georges, Andrew Gonzalez,\* William Neri, Robert Alvarado Switala\***

Cello **Angel Miguel Hernández, Erica Snowden-Rodríguez,\***  
**Caleb Vaughn-Jones, Francisco Vila\***

Bass **Xavier Foley,\* Christopher Johnson\***

\*\* Concertmaster

\* Principal

**Program**

***Fuga con Pajarillo*** .....Aldemaro Romero (1928–2007)

**Divertimento for String Orchestra**..... Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

Allegro non troppo

Molto adagio

Allegro assai

*Southern Harmony*..... Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)  
II. Reel Time

*Global Warming* .....Michael Abels (b. 1962)

~~Intermission~~

*Elegy: In Memoriam – Stephen Lawrence*..... Philip Herbert (b. 1960)

*For Justice and Peace* .....Xavier Foley (b. 1994)

**Rubén Rengel**, violin  
**Xavier Foley**, double bass

*Source Code* ..... Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

**String Quartet no. 14 in D Minor**, .....Franz Schubert (1797–1828)  
**“Death and the Maiden”**  
IV. Presto

The national Sphinx Virtuosi tour is made possible with the generous support of JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Robert F. Smith, with additional support from Aetna and the National Endowment for the Arts/Art Works.

The Sphinx Virtuosi are exclusively represented in North America by California Artists Management ([www.CalArtists.com](http://www.CalArtists.com)).

Duration: 90 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

In consideration of both audiences and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

## First Impressions: Post-Performance Discussion

Share your first impressions with members of the Sphinx Virtuosi company and Arts + Cultural Programming's executive director, Jedediah Wheeler.



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## About the Artists

Since its founding in 2004, **Sphinx Virtuosi** has defined itself as the most diverse professional chamber orchestra in the country. The dynamism in this ensemble's approach to music making offers an experience of unmatched vibrancy for seasoned and new audiences alike. Comprising 18 of the nation's top black and Latinx classical soloists, these artists tour annually as cultural ambassadors to communities far and wide.

This unique self-conducted ensemble earned rave reviews from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Sun Times*, and beyond. Allan Kozinn of the *New York Times* described their performance as "first-rate in every way. . .producing a more beautiful, precise and carefully shaped sound than some fully professional orchestras that come through Carnegie Hall in the course of the year." Since their Carnegie debut in 2004, Sphinx Virtuosi have returned to Carnegie Hall annually from 2006, performing to sold-out halls and earning outstanding reviews. At once a bridge between communities of color and the classical music establishment, Sphinx Virtuosi continue to garner critical acclaim during their annual national tours to many of the leading venues around the country. Inspired by Sphinx's overarching mission of transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts, the Sphinx Virtuosi

work to advance the social impact of music upon our greater society. Dedicated to new music, the ensemble has pioneered the discovery of gems by composers of color, with the aim of expanding the canon and amplifying new and important voices. Collaborations with composers like Michael Abels, Kareem Roustom, Jimmy López, Gabriela Lena Frank, Jessie Montgomery, Daniel Bernard Roumain, Terence Blanchard, and Xavier Foley are among many exciting highlights. Masterworks by Shostakovich, Bartók, Schubert, Jennifer Higdon, John Adams, Bach, and Mozart are often woven into the carefully curated programs, which combine risk, exploration, and homage. They have also collaborated with Denyce Graves, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Joshua Bell, Pinchas Zukerman, Chicago Children's Choir, Damien Sneed, and others.

As individual artists, Sphinx Virtuosi have performed as soloists with America's major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland, Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras. Members also hold professional orchestral positions, and several have been named laureates of other prestigious international competitions, including the Queen Elizabeth and Yehudi Menuhin. Roster members are graduates of the nation's top music schools, including Juilliard, Curtis, and Cleveland Institutes of Music, Eastman School, and beyond. The Sphinx Virtuosi's first recording was released on the White Pine label and features music of Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Gabriela Lena Frank, and George Walker. Sphinx Virtuosi are passionate about empowering the next generation of artists and audiences, and as such, enjoy building interactive, bilingual (English/Spanish) programs and working with schools in underrepresented communities.

## About the Company

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The **Sphinx Organization** is the Detroit-based national organization dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts. Led by Afa S. Dworkin, its president and artistic director, Sphinx programs reach over 100,000 students as well as live and broadcast audiences of over two million annually. Afa Dworkin's work as the organization's long-time artistic director, and now president, has been recognized globally. She was named one of the 30 Most Influential People by *Musical America* and Detroit's "40 Under 40" by *Crain's Detroit Business*. In



addition, she is a frequent speaker on the importance of inclusion and music education at conferences nationwide and abroad, including the League of American Orchestras, Chamber Music America, Americans for the Arts, International Arts and Ideas Festival, and beyond. Ms. Dworkin also serves as faculty for Roosevelt University's master's program in Performing Arts Administration.

The organization's founding and mission were informed by the life experiences of Aaron Dworkin, who, as a young black violinist, was acutely aware of the lack of diversity both on stage and in the audience in concert halls. He founded Sphinx while an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan to address the stark underrepresentation of people of color in classical music. President Obama's first appointment to the National Council on the Arts, Aaron P. Dworkin is Professor for Art Entrepreneurship and Leadership at University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

Sphinx works to create positive change in the arts field and in communities across the country through a variety of programs organized into four main principles: education and access, artist development, performing artists, and arts leadership. Visit [SphinxMusic.org](http://SphinxMusic.org) for more information.

## Program Notes

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In his *Elegy*, a black British composer, Philip Herbert, looks to solace when justice could not be served for 18-year-old Stephen Lawrence, whose life was lost to a tragic incident of violence. Justice and peace find their way into music without regard to time and place: on this program, we offer Jessie Montgomery's *Source Code*, which pays homage to African-American artists prominent during the peak of the Civil Rights era in the United States. In Jennifer Higdon's *Southern Harmony*, a listener is offered respite while indulging in the delightfully peaceful embrace of the composer's nostalgic view of her homeland. Always up to the beholder, however, is the question of how to unpack what we hear, especially with the historically heavy past of the American South. Even Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*, written only a few short years after the composer's arrest due to rebellious behavior toward the authorities, suggests the most unlikely use of power and protest. Béla Bartók, who was destined to leave Europe for America, was looking for peace and solace during

a challenging time for his homeland, Hungary, as World War II approached. As we reflected on the historical and current challenges of Venezuela, we chose the music of Romero, who invoked traditional dance and improvisatory qualities to entice his audiences. Xavier Foley's new work pays tribute to some of the divisiveness of our days while also offering light and hope. Abels's *Global Warming* not only speaks to the wellbeing of our earth, but expresses a hopeful outlook he had upon global relations and transcending cultural difference. In the end, as a listener, you must decide the role both artists and citizens can play in propelling peace and positivity.

## ***Fuga con Pajarillo***

**Aldemaro Romero**

Aldemaro Romero was born in Venezuela. The country has been on our minds, as many friends, family members, and colleagues anguish over life and conditions there today. It is also a country with a rich history in social impact through rigorous music education, a movement that has swept and spread itself throughout the world, called El Sistema. Through this piece, we celebrate the beauty and intricacy of one of the most popular dance forms, Pajarillo. While we hope that justice and peace prevail in this beautiful country, we also pay tribute to the superb music making that remains an admirable tradition.

## **Divertimento for String Orchestra**

**Béla Bartók**

We were drawn to choose this beloved work for this program, not only because Bartók is arguably one of the most important composers of the 20th century, but because of his life story and how it reflects the ethos of our program theme. Béla Bartók is a Hungarian composer. He is also an immigrant who came to America in search of justice and peace. He is also most certainly a rebel who put his own career and safety on the line by refusing to remain in his country under the Nazi regime or to work with a German publisher to memorialize his work. While Bartók did escape to the United States, as an immigrant he never felt quite at home nor was able to find his peace with parting with his own home. This work, written shortly before his arrival in US, is a moment of respite, forthright lightness, and beauty. He wrote it in 15 days and stylistically paid homage to an earlier time, perhaps as an expression of nostalgia.

## **“Reel Time” from *Southern Harmony***

**Jennifer Higdon**

Ever close your eyes and ask yourself to imagine what the American South might sound like? Composer Jennifer Higdon certainly did! But of course, that is no surprise, as this music, in many ways, was the soundtrack of her childhood. Growing up in Georgia and Tennessee, she often heard the “Tennessee Waltz” and the fiddling, so richly infused with sounds of open strings. This whole element in the program is a look at peace as it was perceived during a simpler time. It is a loving tribute to the Appalachian music tradition. Of course, one might reflect on how few things in life are actually simple and that even with this beauty comes a tried past, rooted in painful traditions and times of injustice. Music reminds us of our humanity and hopes to bind the wounds and reflect on what makes us all connected.

## ***Global Warming***

**Michael Abels**

Michael Abels is one of our most beloved composers. We have had the joy of collaborating with him a number of times: in fact, his celebrated work *Delights and Dances* became something of a theme song for the ensemble! We chose this work not only because of Michael’s recent fantastic success in Hollywood (he wrote the soundtracks for the films *Get Out* [2017] and *Us* [2019], directed by Jordan Peele), but because *Global Warming* has deep resonance with where we feel our society finds itself today. We loved the work so much that we asked Michael to arrange it for us as a string orchestra! The full original score for this work was created in 1991 for the Phoenix Youth Symphony and blends traditional Irish music with Middle-Eastern tones. Composed at the end of the Cold War, after the Berlin Wall came down, *Global Warming* is a celebration of divergent cultures through their own folk music and was one of the first works from an African-American composer to be performed by the National Symphony of South Africa after the election of Nelson Mandela. Talk about the themes of peace, justice, and hope! When Michael wrote it, he was manifesting a deep sense of hopefulness about the planet and global relations. In some ways, by performing it today, we hope to revive that sense through our common humanity.

## ***Elegy: In Memoriam — Stephen Lawrence***

**Philip Herbert**

Stephen Lawrence was a black British teenager from Plumstead, South East London. He was murdered in a racially motivated attack while waiting for a bus. The fallout for



the case included cultural changes of attitudes on racism and the police, and to the law and police practice. It also led to the partial revocation of the rule against double jeopardy. After a lengthy, arduous process, two of the perpetrators were convicted of murder in 2012. The occasion has been recorded as one of the most important moments in Britain's history of criminal justice and one of the highest-profile unsolved racially motivated murders. The theme is all too painfully relevant and familiar today, as racially motivated crime continues to trouble our society. We perform this work in remembrance of Stephen and so many others who have been taken from this world unjustly.

## ***For Justice and Peace***

**Xavier Foley**

One of our own, Xavier Foley, is this year's composer-in-residence. He is also a spectacular double bass player and the first one of his instrument to have won the Sphinx Competition! We asked him to create a work that pays tribute to our theme and, in spirit, conveys the dramatic combination of his writing and himself as a soloist, paired with one of our amazing violinists. Thus was born the title work of this program, *For Justice and Peace*. Here is a note from the composer himself: "I was immediately moved by how relevant and urgent the theme was to the issues of our time. . . . [W]orks on this program bring back issues dating from slavery to the Civil Rights era to the modern-day echoes from Venezuela and beyond. I felt that it was my job to then illustrate how the issues of justice and peace remain critical to our society today. It is a divisive world, with much unrest throughout our communities. Of course, there is no better way to illustrate the spirit of that than through new musical expression. I envisioned some special effects and an array of techniques that can be employed by the soloists as well as the orchestra, depicting the sound of a gavel hitting and other similar ideas to draw attention to the justice system and certain challenges it faces. My vision for this work is also to involve the various voices in our society, some heard more often, some more subdominant and therefore subtle. You may hear influences from spirituals and other mediums to give voice to communities of color, often most adversely affected by the injustices. In the end, the music will also offer light and hope, as we all ultimately strive toward peaceful solutions."

## **Source Code**

**Jessie Montgomery**

Whenever possible, we love to collaborate with and play music by our colleagues and friends. We feel that their voices resonate more deeply with the issues of current times, keeping our music fresh, relevant, and live. In this case, our own Jessie Montgomery, a violinist-composer extraordinaire, has toured with and led our ensemble many times. We felt that this piece pays tribute to a musical element that was the soundtrack of one of the most abhorrent periods of American history. We've asked her to share her inspiration behind this unique work. "The first sketches of *Source Code* began as transcriptions of various sources from African-American artists prominent during the peak of the Civil Rights era in the United States. I experimented by re-interpreting gestures, sentences . . . by choreographer Alvin Ailey, poets Langston Hughes and Rita Dove, and the great jazz songstress Ella Fitzgerald. . . . Ultimately, this exercise of listening, re-imagining, and transcribing led me back to the black spiritual as a common musical source across all three genres. The spiritual is a significant part of the DNA of black folk music, and subsequently most (arguably, all) American pop music forms that have developed to the present day. . . ."

## **Presto from String Quartet no. 14 in D Minor, "Death and the Maiden"**

**Franz Schubert**

To close the program, we bring you one of the most beloved works in the chamber music canon. By now, you might wonder how this work relates to the theme. Well, even famous composers sometimes got in trouble with authority. Heads of state weren't exactly relaxed in 1820. Ideas of protest, war, and revolution were often the hot topics of conversation among artists. So, when Austrian secret police observed Franz Schubert and his friends "inveighing against [officials] with insulting and opprobrious language," young Franz and his friends were arrested. Not only was he reprimanded, but in a society where the police approved everything, his record was a hindrance to his activities and daily life. Both poetic, lyrical, and often dark in much of his writing, Schubert pays tribute in this work to Greek poetry. As the name suggests, Death teases and lures the Maiden and aims to take her life. The music is beautiful, energetic, furious, and unrelenting, all at once.

—Afa S. Dworkin,  
*President and Artistic Director, The Sphinx Organization*

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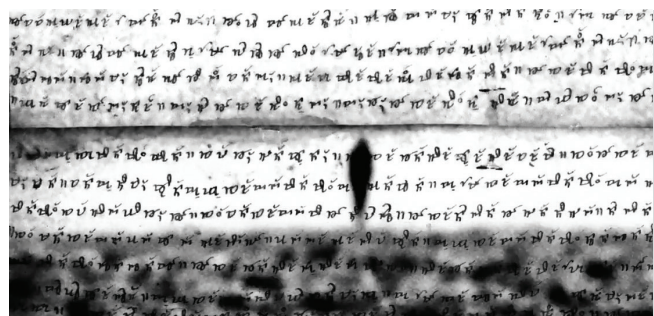
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PEAK Debut  
October 16–20, 2019  
Lena Herzog  
*Last Whispers*

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**Programs in this season are made possible in part by funds from:**

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