

SPRING 2020

# QUARTER NOTES

News for Hartford Symphony Orchestra Donors & Friends

## THE CHALLENGE

## MAINTAINING MUSIC AND COMMUNITY IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

In the span of less than a week, all our lives have been upended. Theaters went dark, orchestras were silenced, and we are told to maintain distance from one another. At the very moment when music should bring us together, we are asked to stand apart.

It is now vital that we retain and reinforce the fabric of our community and our support of one another. Rather than socially distancing, we are merely physically distancing. We will remain socially bonded through our friendships and through the music.

While performances have been cancelled, the HSO is working remotely because the "show" must go on. While we cannot control Covid-19, as artists and innovators we can respond with imagination and determination. Historically, the world's most transformative art has been created through perseverance under difficult conditions.


Now, more than ever, music is community, with its power to lift spirits, cleanse the soul and unite us in adversity. For the first time, because the printing houses are closed, Quarter Notes cannot appear in a print version. This newsletter will



be broadly distributed electronically, maintaining the connections that music has made possible. Visit our website ([www.hartfordsymphony.org](http://www.hartfordsymphony.org)) and Facebook page for updates and watch for our regular emails. We will bring you stories from inside the symphony, but communication travels both ways. Please share your stories about how you are coping and what the music means to you with an email to Ruth Sovronsky, HSO's Development Director, at [rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org).

This is a difficult time for all, and as the economic impact will severely impact the Hartford Symphony

Orchestra, we urge that you take advantage of our free exchange policy to see another performance or donate the value of your tickets back to the Hartford Symphony and receive the full value of your tickets as a tax credit. To do either, please call **860-244-2999** or email [tickets@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:tickets@hartfordsymphony.org). Every donation makes a difference.

Successes are sweetened and defeats softened because we experience them together. Thank you for being part of the HSO family, and let's walk together through this difficult time and enjoy the beautiful future on the other side. 

**TO SUPPORT THE HSO IN OUR TIME OF GREATEST NEED, DONATE NOW**

[hartfordsymphony.org/individual-support/donate-now/](http://hartfordsymphony.org/individual-support/donate-now/)



*Alive through great music!*

HSO PROGRAMS ARE FUNDED IN PART BY:



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FALCETTI PIANOS





## THE ONGOING EVOLUTION OF THE HARTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**T**he Hartford Symphony Orchestra, with a 76-season history, has its eye on the future. To remain current and vibrant, and building on our long-standing tradition of service to its neighborhood, the Symphony has broadened its reach to embrace an ever-expanding community.

The HSO's eight-word mission statement reflects our prime directive: to enrich lives and community through great music. This season we proudly launched two new organizational partnerships with The Boys and Girls Club of Hartford and The Chrysalis Center. The programs for our new partners was designed in a collaborative process to meet each organization's unique goals and objectives.

The changing face of the Symphony is visible. If you've looked closely at the stage during our February performance, you might have noticed many new faces. In fact, since September 2016, nearly one-third of the orchestra members are new.

For each new musician with the Symphony, anywhere between 30 and 60 musicians came to Hartford from around the country to audition for that seat. For the last three auditions (Assistant Principal Bassoon, 3rd/Bass Clarinet and Assistant Principal Trombone), a total of 150 musicians applied, and we hosted more than 115 participants at the in-person auditions.

At the HSO, as in every orchestra, the audition process is grueling. An extensive repertoire ("rep") list, unique to each instrument, must be prepared in advance, and each candidate must be ready to play any selection on the list. There are three rounds (preliminaries, semi-finals and finals) and the winner is selected from a small group of finalists. All auditions are "blind," which means that the musicians cannot see or speak with the audition committee, nor can the committee see the musicians, who are judged solely on the quality of their sound and musicianship.

We count ourselves fortunate that our welcoming community and gifted Music Director continue to attract the best and the brightest musicians to Hartford. We are so grateful to each of our musicians, whether brand new or long-term members, for their unparalleled energy and extraordinary musicianship. When performances resume, you'll see the **27 newest musicians** of the Hartford Symphony who have joined us since September of 2016. Many now occupy leadership positions, and we're so proud to introduce you to all of them!

### NEWEST MUSICIANS OF THE HARTFORD SYMPHONY

#### STRINGS:

**Sooyeon Kim** is the new Assistant Concertmaster, who joined in the Fall of 2019

**Nuri Lim** joined the first violin section in the Fall of 2018

**Allyson Michael** joined the first violin section in the Fall of 2016

**Xiaoxuan Shi** is the new Principal Second Violin, who joined in the Fall of 2019

**Yinbin Qian** joined the second violin section in the Fall of 2019

**Yue Sun** joined the second violin section in the Fall of 2017

**Gary Capozziello** joined the second violin section in the Fall of 2016

**Simony Bilyk** joined the second violin section in the Fall of 2016

**Aekyung Kim**, who joined the viola section in the Fall of 2016, became the new Assistant Principal Viola in the Fall of 2019

**Nick Borghoff** joined the viola section in the Fall of 2019

**Gretchen Frazier** joined the viola section in the Fall of 2018

**Jiawei Yan** joined the viola section in the Fall of 2019

**Bethany Hargreaves** joined the viola section in the Fall of 2018

**Georgina Rossi** joined the viola section in the Fall of 2016

**Jia Cao** is the new Assistant Principal Cello, who joined in the Fall of 2019

**Yoonhee Ko** joined the cello section in the Fall of 2019

**Cara Cheung** joined the cello section in the Fall of 2016

**Julianne Russell** joined the bass section in the Fall of 2016

#### **WOODWINDS:**

**Emma Resmini** is the new Principal Flute, who joined in the Fall of 2018

**Eddie Sundra**, who became the 3rd/ Bass Clarinet in the Fall of 2016, became the new Assistant Principal Clarinet in the Fall of 2018

**Paul Cho** became the 3rd/Bass Clarinet in February of 2020

**Pinghua "Felix" Ren** is the new Assistant Principal Bassoon, who joined in February 2020

**Scott Switzer**, who is a substitute bassoonist with our symphony, became the Librarian in the Fall of 2018

#### **BRASS:**

**John Charles Thomas** is the new Assistant Principal Trumpet, who joined in the Fall of 2017

**Robert Hoveland** is the new Assistant Principal Trombone, who joined in February of 2020

**Aaron Albert** is the new Bass Trombone, who joined in the Winter of 2019

#### **HARP:**

**Susan Knapp Thomas**, who has been a substitute musician with the HSO, became the new Principal Harp in the Fall of 2019. 

## **WHEN WE RETURN TO PERFORMANCES, WE HOPE YOU'LL WANT TO GET CLOSER TO THE MUSIC. HOW? HOST A MUSICIAN!**



Jiawei Yan, Wes and Chloe Horton

**F**our years ago, the HSO launched one of its most successful initiatives, a first-time hosting program that pairs out-of-area HSO musicians with community members, providing them with a place to stay when they are in Hartford for rehearsals and concerts. To date, the HSO is still one of the very few orchestras in the country to offer accommodations that encourage musicians and music lovers to forge such special and unique bonds. **Our hosting program will be a vital resource when our Symphony is permitted to resume our concert schedule.**

An important fact that the symphony-going public may not realize is that musicians often travel considerable distances beyond their home community to perform with good professional orchestras. HSO musicians travel to Hartford from New York, Boston and as far away as Michigan, to perform at our Masterworks, POPS!, Sunday Serenades, Talcott Mountain Music Festival or educational Discovery concerts. **HSO Hosting**, a network of

families and individuals, was formed to show meaningful support and gratitude to our musicians for all they do for us, and in the past few years, more and more audience members have stepped forward without hesitation to open their hearts and homes. **HSO Hosting** builds bonds, encourages relationships,

and shows our musicians they are highly valued. And now, with even more new musicians in the HSO, new hosts are needed and encouraged to join our expanding family.

**HSO Hosting** has grown to 42 current active hosts in downtown Hartford and throughout the Greater Hartford region, plus more than 40 registered musicians who participate in the program at varying times, depending on need. This season, we have actively hosted a total of 30 different musicians, which includes nine substitute players from our roster. *The HSO is becoming known as the orchestra with a great heart to match our great sound!* As our roster of new musicians continues to grow, more musicians are interested in auditioning with us. The result? We have one of the best regional symphonies around. We are proud of our 100% success rate in hosting musicians, but as we attract more musicians, we have an increased need for host families. We proudly have a welcoming community that cares deeply about its musicians, and we don't want to ever say no to a musician in need. With new



musicians joining the HSO, we are seeking additional hosts to join our expanding family.

One of our new violists, Jiawei Yan, has been with her host family, Wes and Chloe Horton, continuously since the cancellation of our March Masterworks. Her stay with them began during rehearsals and when the March concert was cancelled, they invited her to remain with them for her safety, rather than return to New York City. Jiawei's mother, who lives in China and experienced the Covid-19 outbreak there, encouraged Jiawei to accept the Hortons' invitation, who have embraced her as their own. Wes and Chloe enjoy daily concerts as Jiawei practices, and, using her expert computer skills, Jiawei created a home office for Wes, with remote connections to his office and law partners.

When you become an HSO host, you benefit from the special relationship that develops between host and musician. The result is a "win-win" for all.

Comments from our hosts and musicians about their past experiences reveal why the program remains such a success:

**From Marshall & Sandy Rulnick, now in their fourth year of hosting:**

*"As an HSO subscriber for over 50 years, my wife Sandra and I have long felt a close bond with the HSO, but those bonds increased exponentially when we became hosts. Brian Diehl, principal trombone, has stayed with us many times, and as a result, he and his wife, Julie, have become dear friends. Being closer to the musicians gives us deeper appreciation for their demanding jobs (commuting, practicing, rehearsing, performing, teaching and more) and, our lives have been immeasurably enriched because of the HSO hosting program. Without hesitation, we encourage others to give it a try!"*



Marshall Rulnick with John Charles Thomas (trumpet) and Brian Diehl (trombone)

**From Brian Diehl, HSO's principal trombone, who travels to us from the Boston area:** *"Through hosting, I've been introduced to supremely wonderful HSO fans who have graciously opened their homes to us – the musicians – and permitted us to share a glimpse into their interesting lives. Since the program's inception, I've stayed with several exceptional people. The friendships formed with my hosts are priceless. What a difference in ownership and inclusion this program has made for the musicians who travel to play with the Hartford Symphony. It has created a true sense of belonging in the HSO family. My thanks to ALL involved!"*

**From Jeff and Orit Tager, new hosts in the 19/20 season:** *"The wonderfully positive HSO Hosting helped us to transition from 'consumer of' to 'participant in' the HSO. Through our musician guests, we have learned so much more about the HSO and the life of a professional musician. We now appreciate how much practice and preparation goes into each performance, and we enjoy listening to our guest's practice sessions, which heightens our anticipation of attending the performance. We are pleased to participate in this exceptional program and look forward to even*



Jeff and Orit Tager, with Gary Cappozziello (violin)


*more interaction with HSO musicians and staff."*

**From Gary Cappozziello, four-year HSO violinist but new to the Hosting program in the 19/20 season:** *"What an experience! I am so fortunate and grateful to have wonderful hosts who generously treat me as family when I come to perform with the Hartford Symphony. Although I began with the HSO four years ago while a Connecticut resident, my wife's job change compelled us to move to New York this past summer. Thankfully, HSO Hosting means that I can continue to play with the Symphony I love. It helps me survive the many hours of commuting which are part of every musician's job. I wish more orchestras would offer this type of program, which is so invaluable."*

**From Rebecca Noreen, contra bassoon, and now in her fourth year of the hosting program:** *"Staying with hosts has made it possible for me to continue to perform with the Hartford Symphony. Little did I realize I would make so many wonderful friends and have so many memorable experiences. I now look forward to seeing and spending time with my families who have adopted me!"*



Rebecca Noreen (contrabassoon) with Walter and Anne Mayo

When we resume operations, we hope more of you will consider hosting. Who can be a host? Anyone! If you have an extra private bedroom in your home, along with a separate private bathroom, and would love to make one of our musicians feel welcome, you are the perfect host. We ask that you provide breakfast items (much like a "B&B") and an inviting atmosphere. You are NEVER asked to provide any transportation, and, most importantly, you always have the final word as to whether you're available to host for any given concert. 

**Interested?** For more details about how it works, contact Ruth Sovronsky, Director of Development, at 860-760-7321 or [rsovrnsky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:rsovrnsky@hartfordsymphony.org). **We can promise you'll be glad you did.**

## BRAVO! GALA UPDATE

**PLEASE JOIN OUR VIRTUAL GALA ON  
MAY 2 AT 7 PM TO SUPPORT HSO  
MUSICIANS AND NEW DIGITAL  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS**



**N**ecessity is the mother of invention, and the innovators and creators at the Hartford Symphony Orchestra have been busy re-inventing and re-imagining our annual Bravo Gala. A virtual event is now planned to help raise the funds that are central to the Symphony's mission: serving our community. In the spirit of enduring optimism, our 2020 Gala, IGNITE JOY, has been renamed **REIMAGINE JOY**, in the belief that together, we will reimagine ways to spread joy and hope.



Principal clarinet Curt Blood

Each year, our Gala raises critical funds for our education and community engagement programs, but this year, in light of Covid-19, there is an extra imperative and an added urgency: we must now raise funds to support our musicians and to immediately develop new on-line learning and engagement tools for students, seniors, music educators and families.

With all we are facing as a symphony and as a community, reimagining joy is even more vital. When we have moved beyond this crisis, and we **will** move beyond it, our children, our seniors, our hospitals, schools and communities will need music more than ever before. And we intend to be ready to restart, rekindle and return to the music. So together, let's reimagine joy.

Timothy Brown, HSO's new Education & Community Engagement Manager, has a very clear vision of the Symphony's role in our community and our future:





"Whatever we do in our community—whether our Symphony in Schools programs, Family Concerts, or performances at senior living facilities—is every bit as important as our subscriber concerts at The Bushnell. If we want to continue to grow our audience, to enhance our impact in the greater Hartford area, we must first be a strong community partner."

HSO concerts are thrilling for audiences and musicians alike and serving the community needs remains at the heart of everything we do. Creating online tools for families, students, seniors and educators is especially needed right now. When schools resume, the usual funding concerns and budget shortfalls will be amplified and may force even more school districts to cut their music programs. We plan to be ready and on the front lines to help fill the gap.

HSO's engagement initiatives are especially vital, particularly for the inner-city agencies and schools that we serve through our school-day Discovery concerts, Symphony In Schools, and our newest Listen, Share, Celebrate program.

Upon joining the HSO team, Timothy made clear that his primary goal was to cultivate deeper relationships with area schools, civic groups, community organizations, and other arts organizations. Developing deeper relationships with partner organizations demands that we tailor our programs to match the needs of specific audiences, develop new and innovative programs, and use music as an agent for positive change.


Under Timothy's leadership, two new partnerships were already in progress when Covid-19 put everything into a temporary holding pattern. The new programs included the Asylum Hill Boys and Girls Club, and the Chrysalis Center, a mental health service provider in Hartford. Both partnerships are uniquely designed to address the needs of a defined population, and each project is focused on the use of music as a vehicle for positive, personal growth.

Timothy, who attends all program sessions, observed initial outcomes and participant reactions that exceeded his expectations. Given the early positive responses, we are

especially saddened that both initiatives were suspended abruptly. Nevertheless, we intend to be fully prepared to restart both projects once the Symphony is permitted to resume operations. We are determined to be ready. To continue what we began, both programs require the critical funds raised at our annual Gala event.

This year, our annual Gala is even more important. Not only

is it our way of coming together as a community – even as a virtual community – but we must support our musicians NOW and immediately develop free digital educational tools urgently needed by teachers and families.

This year, EVERYONE can attend our virtual Gala and your involvement is more important than ever before. We are determined to stick together, care for each other, find joy together, and hold onto the music together. We will provide updates on how the new virtual gala will work, and we hope you'll "attend." If you can afford it, this is when we need you. [CLICK HERE FOR UPDATES ON GALA DETAILS AND TO HELP FUND THE INSPIRATION!](#) 

For more information about how to participate in Reimagine Joy, or make a special contribution for the musicians and the vital programs Timothy oversees and develops, please contact Jennifer Galante, Annual Fund & Special Events Manager, at 860-760-7302, or at [jgalante@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:jgalante@hartfordsymphony.org).

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

# JOHN AND MICHELE DOLAN, HSO'S NEWEST ENCORE SOCIETY MEMBERS

Our newest Encore Society donors, John and Michele Dolan, love every type of music, from jazz to classical and everything in between. They want you to know they are "just regular folks" who believe everyone can make an impact.

"We're not wealthy," smiled John. "We own a modest home in Elmwood." "But," Michele stressed, "You don't have to be rich to make a difference. If every audience member contributed to the Symphony, and became Encore Society donors just like us, then we'd all get our wish and the Symphony will be here for a long time to come."

Growing up in the Hartford area, John was introduced to the Hartford Symphony at the age of ten when his parents took him to a performance. He played piano until his high school friends told him that "piano was for girls." He still regrets that he didn't continue. Michele had never been to a symphony performance until she met John. She had no idea that she would fall in love with classical music, just as she'd fallen in love with John.

Even with two full time salaries (John as an IT analyst for the State of Connecticut and Michele as a disability product specialist at Aetna), symphony tickets had to fit into their budget. It was not until 2005 that they became subscribers. As they attended more local music events, they noticed that the musicians performing in the jazz festivals were also on stage with the Hartford Symphony. The more events they attended, the more they realized how much of their lives revolved around

the arts. It's a wonderful "upward" spiral.

Now retired, John and Michele cannot imagine a life without music and theater. In addition to the Hartford Symphony, they subscribe to TheaterWorks, attend jazz and pop performances, and so much more. They consider themselves lucky to live near Hartford, a small city with a disproportionate richness in arts and culture. Upon learning that ticket

explained their thinking: "It's important for everyone to have a will. Making a bequest to the Symphony doesn't cost anything, doesn't change your lifestyle, but ensures the continuation of the music we adore." "We want to give back to the art organizations that have given us so much, because art and music so deeply enhance the quality of our lives," said Michele. "We have world-class musicians in our backyard, and we want that to continue for years to come."

John and Michele want others to make sure that they, too, have a will, and to make decisions based on those things in life that bring joy. "We've become friends with




sales represent only a small portion of what the Symphony needs to survive, they became Annual Fund donors with a modest donation each year. "When you become aware of the need to support something you love," said John, "you just feel compelled to help. If all of us realized how important it is to support the symphony, imagine what a difference we could make!"

HSO's Quarter Notes Newsletter made them aware of the Encore Society, and after a discussion, they decided to include the symphony in their own estate plans. John

the people sitting around us at the Symphony. We've gotten to know the musicians. The Symphony musicians and staff make us feel that we're part of the family."

Their story is a call-to-action and they encourage others to follow their lead: "If you're middle class, just like us, you can still make a difference. We need everyone to support the symphony in any way they can to help our community survive into the future."

John and Michele, we couldn't have said it better. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts! 



**“THE BEST WAY  
TO PREDICT THE  
FUTURE IS TO  
CREATE IT.”**

*–Abraham Lincoln*

## **JOIN THE HSO'S ENCORE SOCIETY AND BUILD A LEGACY THAT LASTS.**

**H**SO's Encore Society honors those who have included the Symphony in their estate plans. Estate gifts will make an enormous difference in the Symphony's ability to sustain itself in the future. Including the HSO in your estate plans is the best way to leave a legacy that will support music for the next generation. Encore Society members are immediately accorded Concertmaster status and accompanying benefits, even if their annual giving is not at that level.

### **What's the catch?**

None! The Encore Society costs nothing to join. It is a commitment to make a future donation to the Symphony from your estate.

### **Is this important?**


Yes – now more than ever in light of the financial crisis created by Covid-19. Legacy gifts are critical to the orchestra's future stability. Most important, irrespective of the amount of your legacy gift, by becoming part of the Encore Society, you join a treasured group of donors who

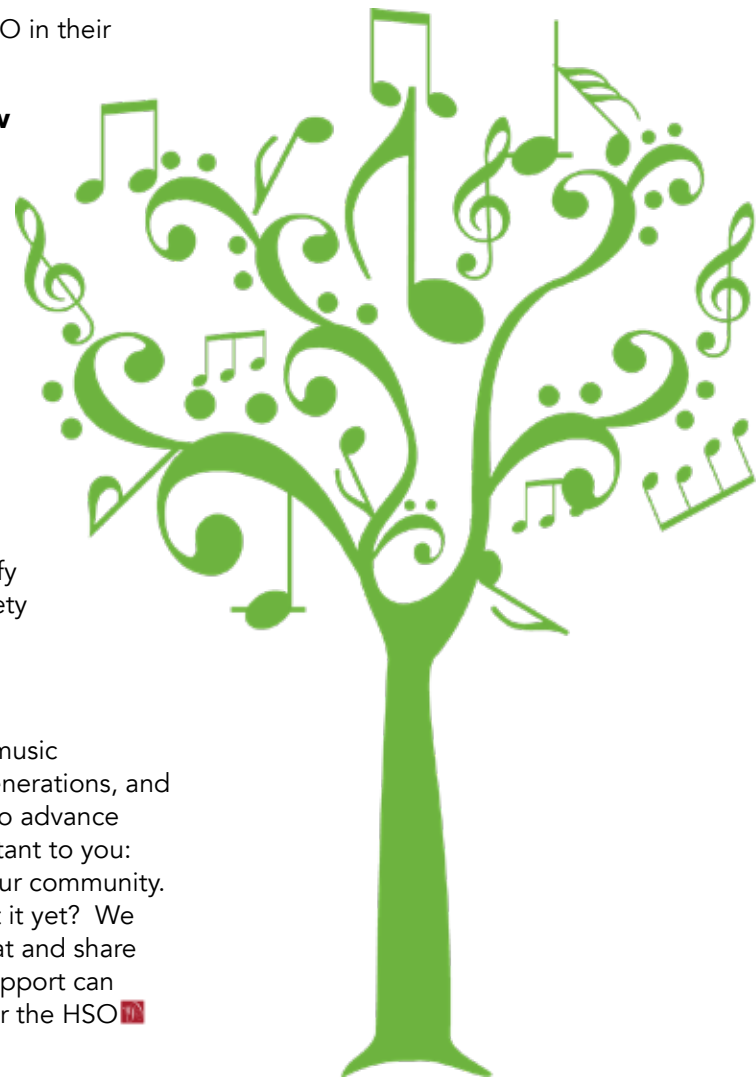
already include the HSO in their estate plans.

### **OK, I'd like to know more. Next steps?**

You may have already named the HSO as a beneficiary of a retirement account, a life insurance policy, or another asset. Or, you may have named the HSO in your will. Simply letting us know of your plans will qualify you as an Encore Society member.

### **The impact?**

Your gift ensures that music continues for future generations, and offers an opportunity to advance the values most important to you: maintaining music in our community. Haven't thought about it yet? We would be happy to chat and share the many ways your support can build a bright future for the HSO .



**For more information, please contact Ruth Sovronsky,  
Development Director, at 860-760-7321, or  
[rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org)**



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

# TIMOTHY BROWN

## HSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

For the HSO, an organization with a small staff, having a team that works well together is critical. We search until we find the right person. The hunt for our new Education and Community Engagement Manager lasted nearly five months. Timothy began in November of 2019, and his extraordinary qualifications and positive outlook prove that he is a perfect fit!

### QN: Tell us about the career path that brought you to the HSO.

Music has always been central to my life. My mother played piano and my father played trombone. I began piano lessons at age 6, and in 5th grade, I added clarinet and became very serious about music and composition. Throughout high school, I competed in the Iowa Music Teachers Association as a classical pianist and then began a musical exploration that included jazz piano, West African drumming and Indian classical music. In college at St. Olaf, I continued on piano and clarinet, as well as theory, composition and conducting. One of my teachers was Hugh Wolff, then the conductor of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. I toured Eastern Europe as a clarinetist in the St. Olaf Orchestra, was the student conductor of the St. Olaf Orchestra, student conductor of the St. Olaf Cantorei Choir, and founder and music director of the St. Olaf Contemporary Ensemble. I taught private piano lessons and played keyboard with various bands and have a BA in Music.

**QN: That's quite an impressive musical background! But you chose a different path. Why?**

I love music but I have a second undergraduate degree – a Bachelor of Science in Conservation Biology, and a Master of Science in Social Ecology from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. I'm deeply passionate about the natural world and have always loved the outdoors. I've studied grizzly bears in Alaska and the Yukon Territory!

### QN: How do you find common ground in music and science?

Music and science each require creativity and critical thinking. Both disciplines are extremely rewarding, personally and professionally. But I'm most passionate about projects that cross boundaries. At Yale, for example, I helped create an Environmental Humanities Initiative to bring together artists, philosophers, writers, historians and other humanities scholars with natural and physical scientists. When you first connect people from such diverse backgrounds, you spend a lot of time translating! But then something magical happens—connections begin to be made and collaborations emerge.

### QN: With your vast interests, do you have any hobbies?

In addition to playing music, I also love to write, cook, and have even dabbled in documentary film. And I love anything outdoors. I'm an avid whitewater kayaker, mountain climber, scuba diver and gardener.

### QN: What do you hope to achieve as the new Education and Community Engagement Manager?

I believe that education is all about unlocking creativity, honing critical



thinking skills, and helping people to make connections that enrich and improve their lives. Two words guide my approach to teaching and learning: inspiration and interdependence. During my very first conducting class, Miles Johnson, the great conductor of the St. Olaf Band, said a conductor's job is to inspire musicians to play. In the same way, a teacher's primary job is to inspire students to learn. Before joining the HSO team, I worked as a classroom teacher, and, taking the advice of Miles Johnson to heart, I believe that I'm at my best when I find ways to inspire others, whether in the classroom, on the stage, or in my personal life. Interdependence means that everything is connected to everything else. As an educator, I want to discover and employ those connections for deeper learning. It is truly remarkable to realize that the lessons I learned from music continue to permeate every area of my life.

### QN: What can you share with our donors about your family?

My wife, a psychologist, runs the Yale Gender Program, an interdisciplinary health clinic for transgender and gender non-conforming youth. We have two children under the age of three, so between work and children, we stay very busy! Now I'm having fun watching our toddler explore the vast world of music. Who knows, maybe someday we'll even play music together! 🎵

## MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT

# INTRODUCING AEKYUNG KIM

## ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL VIOLA

**A**ekyung's first audition with the Hartford Symphony was in 2016, when she became a new member of the viola section. In the Fall of 2019, she won the audition as our new Assistant Principal Viola! We are delighted to introduce her to all of you!

### Quarter Notes: What first drew you to music?

I was born in Richmond, Virginia, but grew up on Long Island, close to New York City, and I thank my parents for taking me to concerts and Broadway shows as a child. One of my earliest memories is sitting in the front section of a Broadway theater so I could see the pit orchestra. I was fascinated by the musicians – especially the string players – and the sound they created as an ensemble. I quickly began asking for lessons!

### QN: Did you start lessons first on viola?

The funny story is that I didn't! I wanted viola, but one of my sisters said if I wanted to play the "fun stuff," I should play violin. I started violin at age six and immediately began to watch videos of Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman and Jascha Heifetz. The first concert I attended featured Sarah Chang performing The Four Seasons (which we just played in January), and I was hooked.

### QN: Who were/are your mentors?

Dr. I. Hao Lee, my teacher through middle school and high school, helped me love music even when I wanted to quit. He encouraged me to switch to viola at age 15 and I am forever grateful. Toby Appel, my undergraduate teacher at Juilliard, was always positive, and my two graduate teachers, Heidi Castleman and Cynthia Phelps, are not just incredible musicians – they are incredible humans. I aspire to be like them in all I do. But my most important mentor is my mom, who made a profound difference in my life. Now, as a teacher myself, I appreciate her extraordinary patience in sitting with me and helping me practice as a young child.

Her love and dedication made all the difference – and I know it's why I am a musician today.

### QN: Not everyone who studies music becomes a musician. What was your "aha" moment?

Shortly after switching to viola, I was accepted to New York's All-State Orchestra. We played Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from West Side Story and the Adagietto from Mahler's Fifth Symphony. It was the first time I experienced the overwhelming sensation of being in the center of the sound and from that moment, I knew I had to pursue music as my career. And I LOVE the viola – playing the middle register gives me a full and more sublime experience playing within the orchestra. It truly defies description. I was so lucky to be admitted to Juilliard as an undergraduate and graduate student.

### QN: If you were not playing viola, what other instruments would you choose?

Probably piano and voice, and one day I'd love to take voice lessons. But honestly, viola is truly MY instrument. The viola's middle register is so close to the human voice. I can feel the sound fill my core, and it quite literally makes my heart full. And so many of the greatest composers were violists: Bach, Beethoven, Dvorak, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Schubert and more.

### QN: What would you consider to be your greatest musical achievement?

The most memorable musical moment was playing at the Kennedy Center Honors with Yo-Yo Ma! I am a Tanglewood alumnus, and the alumna ensemble was accompanying Yo-Yo as a tribute to Seiji Ozawa. What an experience to be on that stage and performing for President Obama and his wife, who were in the audience!

### QN: What other profession would you have chosen if you were not a musician?

When I was much younger, I wanted to be an interior designer or a painter. Now,



my whole life is filled with music, so I cannot imagine anything else! But any other career would have to be something in the arts that allows me to travel the world, just like music does.

### QN: Tell us about your musical favorites – classical and otherwise.

Hands down, it's Beethoven, because of his string quartets. They make me want to cry, sing, laugh, dance and play music for the rest of my life. Other artists I adore are Radiohead and Ella Fitzgerald!

### QN: You mentioned that you teach. Tell us more about that.

I came to Connecticut because of the Hartford Symphony and my teaching position at the Fairfield Trumbull School of Music. I teach some amazing students – both youngsters and adults. My favorite moment is when a student opens up and allow me to be a positive figure in her life, just as my teachers were for me. Passing on my love of music – and all that music means to me – is as important as teaching musical technique. I want to make sure I help all of my students to feel supported in their love for music-making, no matter their age or ability.

### QN: Tell us about your hobbies or interests beyond music.

My two rescue cats are Henry (a white 7-year-old, with one blue eye and one green eye, who, despite a challenging start to his life, is cuddly and sweet) and Leonard (an 8-month-old gray Maine-coon mix who is hilarious, sassy and actually walks on a leash!). I have a deep love for animals, and I just signed up to volunteer at an animal shelter. I love hiking (sometimes with Leonard) and doing acrylic painting with YouTube tutorials. I've also been teaching myself to play other instruments. 🎵



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