

# QUARTER NOTES

News for Hartford Symphony Orchestra Donors & Friends



Charlotte Malin (viola)



Simon Bilyk (violin)



Georgina Rossi (viola)

## “I HOPE I GET IT!”

### A CONVERSATION ABOUT ORCHESTRA AUDITIONS WITH THREE OF HSO'S YOUNG MUSICIANS

**A**s the HSO began our 75th Season in September of 2018, we welcomed seven new musicians on five different instruments: Emma Resmini (Principal Flute), Eddie Sundra (Assistant Principal Clarinet), Jung Eun Kan & Nuri Lim (both first violin, section), Gretchen Frazier & Bethany Hargreaves (both viola, section) and Mina Kim (cello, section).

The process of an orchestra audition was detailed in the Autumn 2016 Quarter Notes cover story. But what about an insider's view of the strange world of symphony auditions, an essential process in the career of an orchestral musician? How does it feel to the musicians who take the auditions? Three of our section players, Simon Bilyk (violin), Georgina Rossi and Charlotte Malin (both on viola), won their auditions in September of 2016 and have been part of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra ever since. Each participates in HSO's "Host A Musician" program, and live with community members during HSO rehearsals and performances. The wonderful relationship these musicians have with our community and their host families made it easy for them to speak candidly.

#### How many professional auditions have you taken?

**Charlotte (viola):** I've taken nine (including the HSO) but made it through prelims only four times. I won the Hartford Symphony audition and in

addition, won principal viola at Hudson Valley.

**Simon (violin):** Not counting grad school and summer festivals, I've taken 31 professional auditions since my first in 2008. Of those, 24 were NOT successful!

**Georgina (viola):** I've taken six professional auditions and won Hartford and Binghamton. I made it to the finals in all of my auditions except the Paris Chamber, when I was eliminated after the first screened round. It was frustrating because I knew it was some of my finest playing, even better than some of my more successful auditions.

#### So, playing your best is no guarantee that you'll win the job?

**Georgina:** I'm proof of that for sure!

#### How do you apply to audition?

**Simon:** You send in the audition fee with your resume. For some, you must submit a recording before you can be accepted for the audition.

**Georgina:** If a recording is needed, I don't bother to apply. I don't have the time or money to spend (between \$300 and \$500) on a good professional recording that can only be used once.

#### How does the cost impact your decision to take an audition?

**Charlotte:** The audition fee is returned unless you don't show, but the travel and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

"I HOPE I GET IT"- CONT'D.

hotel costs (\$300 to \$500 each audition) can be steep. I try to stay with friends to cut down on costs. That means I must pass up auditions for work in Europe because the airfare is just too expensive.

**Simon:** Also, the travel and hotel costs don't include the work you give up in order to prepare for and take the audition. Even if I stay with friends, I prefer to be on my own for audition prep so a hotel is needed, at least for the night before the audition. Now, I only audition for groups nearby to reduce my commuting costs. Unless you're with a full-time orchestra (and there are very few of those) you need to freelance and play with multiple orchestras to earn a living.

**Georgina:** I took a full month to do a series of European auditions (Paris, Netherlands, Oslo) but I'm still recovering from the costs. My younger brother lives and studies in France, so I could stay with him for some of the time, but it was really rough money-wise. There's work in Europe and Asia, but most musicians can't afford to get there for the auditions.

#### **What factors influence your decision about taking an audition?**

**Charlotte:** I always consider the cost of giving up existing work to take an audition I might not win. I need to know I have enough time to adequately prepare, and whether I have a real chance to win the job. The other question is whether I want to live in the city where that orchestra plays. I pass on many auditions because of these factors.

**Simon:** Agreed. It's really hard to balance your need to make a living as a professional musician, with having to take time off from (and lose money) to audition. Each orchestra has a required number of concerts that the musician must play, so no matter how attractive an audition may be, the scheduling might not work. To really prepare well, in addition to constant practice, I need a few days before an audition when I can really focus and prepare. That means I'd have to give up my work on those days, too. Auditioning takes a lot of time, as well as physical and mental preparation. So, for me, the audition has to be really worth it, and I always ask myself, "Do I want to play with

this orchestra?" I'm currently a member of four orchestras (Hartford Symphony, New Haven, Eastern Connecticut and Bangor) so now, any audition would have to be close to home, offer a good rate of pay, and involve a leadership role, such as Principal Second violin or Concertmaster.

**Georgina:** I also consider the risk of injury. If you're working full-time, it's hard to find the time needed to properly prepare for an audition. We must practice for auditions, on top of the regular demands of playing in an orchestra, but we also have to protect our bodies from injury caused by excess playing. It's a real Catch-22. A painter – or a composer – might be able to balance full-time work while pursuing their art, but for musicians, it's really tough. I agree with Simon: the audition has to be really worth it.

#### **What's your most memorable audition?**

**Charlotte:** The one for the Hartford Symphony! It was my first, I was nervous, and the entire process took 12 hours! The practice room for the candidates was really loud and required intense focus and concentration which was exhausting.

**Georgina:** HSO was most memorable for me, too. It was pouring rain and by the time we got to the final round, it was after 11 pm. I was worried I'd make an "exhaustion mistake" and I did! I counted an extra bar of rest in a Mozart excerpt and was sure I'd be eliminated. But since then, I've learned that those types of errors can be ignored.

**Simon:** My grad school audition for Boston Conservatory is most memorable. It was the best I've ever played. It was in front of the panel, without a screen, and I knew I was killing it because I could see the judge at the far end bobbing his head and rocking with me!

#### **What's the hardest challenge to overcome when taking an audition? Anxiety? Time?**

**Charlotte:** It's hard to find the right balance between focus, nerves and relaxation.

**Simon:** For me, it's preparation. It's work I have to do alone. Just "sounding good" won't win the job. To win a job, you have

to be the top player that day. So, to properly prepare, you must get as close to technical perfection (while still sounding musical) under the incredibly stressful conditions of an audition. I know I need at least two nights of really good sleep, and energy foods (like almonds) that won't make me feel full or bloated. Maintaining a positive outlook is essential – you need to feel your best in order to play your best.

**Georgina:** The prep is really stressful. It's lonely and takes weeks or months. Unless you're still in school, there's no one to encourage and guide you. You have to be a bit of a zen master to remember the reason for it all. Music is so abstract. You don't see any results the way a painter can see progress on a painting. You have to believe your prep is paying off, a little bit at a time. You have to remember to take lots and lots of breaks to stretch and exercise. And eat! But here's the bottom line: I love the music. We all do. I trust my skills and know how to play my best, even in situations that stress my nerves. I love my job and I love playing, no matter what the circumstances!

#### **There are musicians who take prescription medications such as beta blockers to help suppress the "fight/flight" response. Do you?**

**Charlotte:** I absolutely know people who do – and although I have not, I'm curious to try. I want to conquer my nerves on my own, but I know it would be great to have a "baseline calm" that you could rely on, and then be freed to just play your best.

**Simon:** I've never been interested in trying the meds. I've had auditions where I felt great, even though my bow shakes in the long notes at the start of the audition. Everyone suffers from nerves – I certainly do – but at least mine are pretty manageable.

**Georgina:** I take one small dose before an important performance. When I forget to take it, nothing terrible happens, because it's such a low dose, but it prevents that pesky shakiness in the arms. My mother, also a violist, encouraged me to try. I finally realized she was right. But, if your confidence is low or your anxiety is a major problem, the medication won't help.

"I HOPE I GET IT"- CONT'D.

**Do you meet people you know at auditions? And how do you handle the competition?**

**Charlotte:** I usually see people I know, but I try not to spend too much mental energy comparing myself to others. Everyone is on their own journey in the audition process.

**Simon:** Meeting friends is one of the challenging and enjoyable aspects of auditions. It's great to find folks who are really friendly but there is a basic etiquette at auditions: let each person do what they need to do. This could mean that conversations are cut short until the prelims are over. There is, I think, that awkward moment when results are announced, and some are pleased, while others are really disappointed. I've been on both sides of that, as have most of us, so there's a lot of empathy.

**Georgina:** I've been surprised by how competitive the atmosphere can be. I tend to expect a friendly experience, but don't often find it. America is the scariest, perhaps because we don't have government support for the arts as they do in Europe, making the environment much more competitive. The Netherlands was much more relaxed, as was Norway.

**How do you handle rejection, which is clearly a part of the process?**

**Charlotte:** It's hard to handle a rejection when you thought you played really well. The challenge is to not let rejections undermine your confidence. You need to stay vigilant about what you must do to improve, but the essential balance between negative self-doubt and positive self-improvement is hard to maintain.

**Simon:** Having lost so many auditions, we have to know that nearly everything about the audition process is beyond our control. So, the best I can do is be true to myself throughout the process, and trust that I prepared to the best of my ability.

**How do you feel about performing in front of a screen?**

**Charlotte:** I do NOT like the screen! Many of my colleagues are fine with it, but I think it makes it harder to perform well. To me, music is about making connections between people, and with a screen, you have no idea how the audience is reacting.

**Simon:** I appreciate the freedom of playing behind the screen, which is great for technical players. But I think my playing is better without the screen. It is strange: you have to be completely quiet, whisper to the proctor if you have a question, and at the same time, you can hear the

judges on the other side speaking softly or opening a soda can. But of course, behind a screen you can make any face you want if you didn't play something well! The HSO audition was entirely screened from start to the finals, but Lenny (Lenonid Sigal, HSO's Concertmaster) was wonderful in the way he welcomed me in, thanked me genuinely as I was leaving, and made the audition process much more comfortable.

**Georgina:** I actually like the screen. I'm a small, skinny lady, and I do very well behind the screen because my sound is bigger than I am. Without it, sometimes the physically larger person will get the job.

**What can orchestras do to make the audition process a bit easier?**

**Charlotte:** Make the rep (repertoire) lists shorter! Some orchestras ask for SO much music you're obliged to prepare, which is not productive. And when the staff runs the audition well, you don't have a lot of extra wait time, which helps enormously.

**Georgina:** Provide hot drinks! Please – tea, coffee, hot chocolate – anything. And make hot drinks available for free. In Europe, this was a godsend. And if food is available nearby at reasonable cost, that would also make a big difference.

**Simon:** Just give me the job! 🎻

**MUSIC BUILDS COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN UPDATE:**

# DONORS HELP RAISE \$7.5 MILLION FOR THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY!

As 2018 drew to a close on December 31st, the Music Builds Community Campaign hit an important milestone: we met the \$1 million challenge grant! With that, our MBC campaign (with a goal of \$10 million) has now raised \$7,510,527! The heroes of the story are all of you, who step forward with enthusiasm and generosity, helping us to secure the future of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

The important \$7.5 million milestone, achieved as we celebrate HSO's diamond anniversary season, is something to celebrate,

but we still have further to go to reach our \$10 million mark. To all of you who are participants in MBC, at whatever level is

comfortable for you, please know that your leadership and generosity is inspiring others, helping us to secure the final \$2.5 million. MBC Chair Rebecca Corbin Loree and the MBC Committee will not rest until we've reached – or even surpassed – our goal.

To learn more about MBC, and how you can make a difference, contact MBC Campaign Manager Ted Bruttomesso at 860-760-7309 or [tbruttomesso@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:tbruttomesso@hartfordsymphony.org). 🎻



# WHEN THE ORCHESTRA PLAYS, KIDS LISTEN!

## DONORS IMPACT CHILDREN THROUGH MUSIC

By Tori Clayton, '17/18 HSO Education Intern



The student audience enjoying HSO's Marian Anderson Discovery Concert

Last season, the HSO's commitment to use music to teach children important lessons about civil rights and justice hit a high note. *The Marian Anderson Story: Dare to Take the Open-Hearted and Courageous Way*, HSO's first Discovery concert of the season, focused on the career of Marian Anderson, the prominent African-American opera singer and activist whose 1939 performance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial foreshadowed the civil rights movement of the 1960's. The children's enthusiastic response, both during the concert and after, left no doubt about the compelling impact of thrilling

music combined with dynamic storytelling.

"The story was very powerful for all black men and women," said 8-year-old Lilliana Madairy of Eli Terry Elementary School in South Windsor. With two onstage actor/vocalists portraying the young Marian Anderson and an older version of Anderson as an established opera singer, the concert focused on Anderson's extraordinary contributions as a musician and civil rights activist. The children's post-concert letters and pictures, which conveyed their excitement, is proof of what we know to be true: music education

enhances children's exposure to the arts, but also enhances education through the arts.

The HSO's Discovery Series, entirely developed and designed in-house by HSO's Assistant Manager of Education and Community Engagement, Miriam Engel, with HSO Assistant Conductor, Adam Boyles, matches musical themes with curriculum from Common Core State Standards and National Core Arts Standards. Original teacher guides, created by Engel for each concert in the series, are distributed to the participating



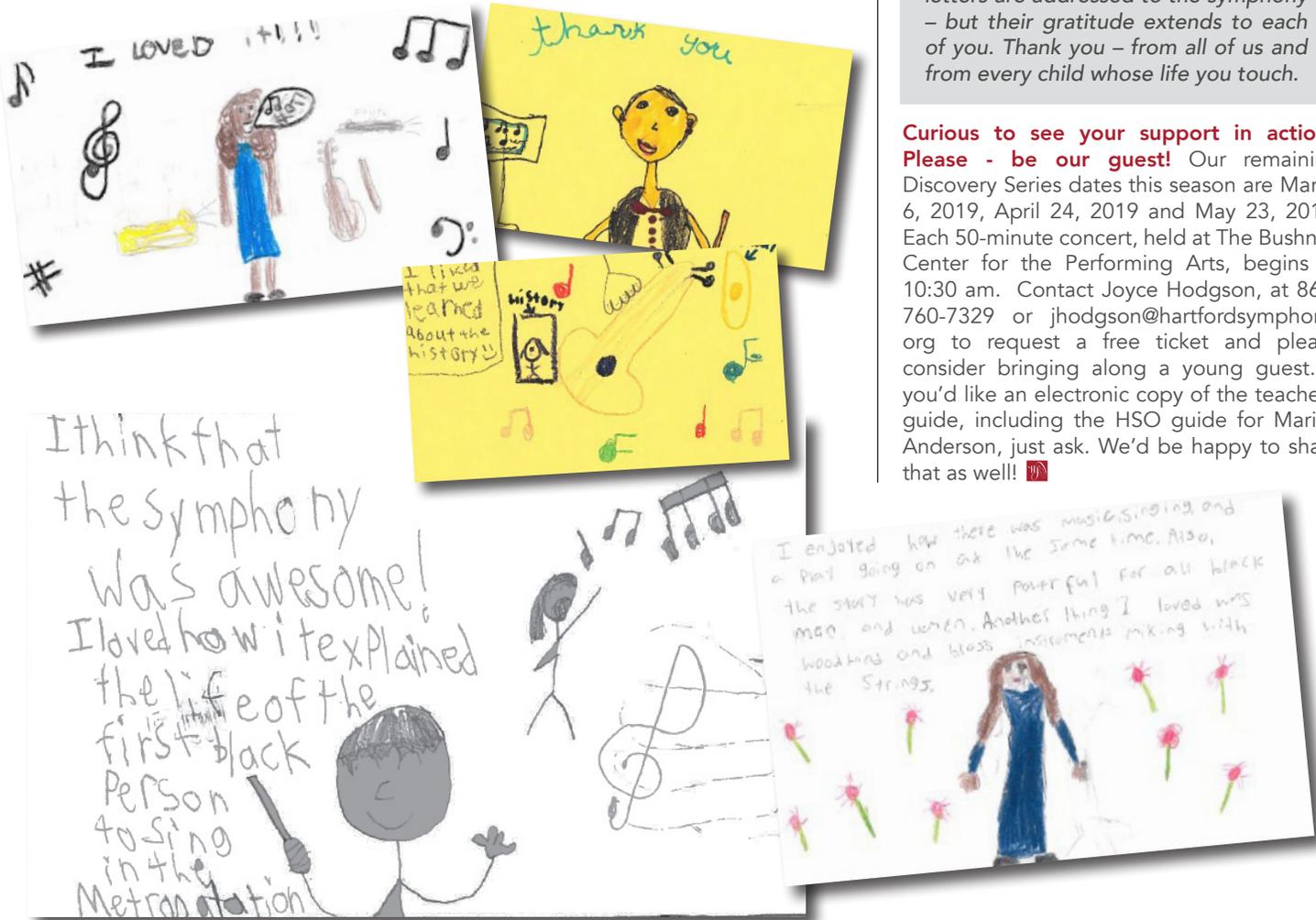
(L to R): Janelle Robinson (adult Marian Anderson) and Alita Moses (young Marian Anderson)

teachers to help integrate concert themes into classroom learning. Our procedure ensures that the concert experience is the culmination of a carefully curated process.

As each school year begins, Connecticut teachers receive notice of HSO's programs, with details about grade-appropriate curriculum. Participating schools pay a nominal per-student ticket price, but ticket fees do not nearly offset the enormous cost of producing and performing a high-quality and vital music education series.

**What makes these exciting and important programs possible? You do!** Your Annual Fund contribution to the Symphony, whether small or large, changes lives. As our vital partner, YOU make the difference for thousands of children who participate in HSO's education programs each year. The children's illustrations and thank-you letters are addressed to the symphony – but their gratitude extends to each of you. Thank you – from all of us and from every child whose life you touch.

**Curious to see your support in action? Please - be our guest!** Our remaining Discovery Series dates this season are March 6, 2019, April 24, 2019 and May 23, 2019. Each 50-minute concert, held at The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, begins at 10:30 am. Contact Joyce Hodgson, at 860-760-7329 or [jhodgson@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:jhodgson@hartfordsymphony.org) to request a free ticket and please consider bringing along a young guest. If you'd like an electronic copy of the teacher's guide, including the HSO guide for Marian Anderson, just ask. We'd be happy to share that as well! 🎵



## SPOTLIGHT ON MUSIC

# THE HSO'S YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION:

## DONORS HELP LAUNCH THE NEXT RISING STAR – AND A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG MUSICIANS.

Honoring the Hartford Symphony's 75th Anniversary Season, we proudly announce the return of HSO's Young Artists Competition. The first round of this exciting instrumental competition, open to Connecticut residents in grades 9 – 12, is already underway. Between October and December of 2018, candidates were invited to apply online. We are now in the process of selecting the applicants who will participate in a series of live auditions. The final round, to be held in a public concert on May 18, 2019, will feature up to five of the top candidates in performance with the HSO. The three top winners, all of whom will receive cash prizes, will be announced at the culmination of the performance. In addition, the first-place winner will be invited to perform next season during one of the HSO's Discovery Concerts, a school-day concert series for student audiences.

Performing with a professional symphony is an opportunity rarely granted to high school students, making this competition exceptionally important to young musicians. We are grateful to the Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for providing the seed support needed to launch the competition, and to the Hoffman Auto Group for their commitment as Reception Sponsor.

We are thrilled that individual donors, eager to support the artists of tomorrow, are also stepping forward, to ensure that we have the necessary financial resources to underwrite the competition.

A special donor-only post-concert reception on May 18, 2019 is planned to introduce our finalists to the remarkable

donors who are making this extraordinary opportunity possible. Interactions between donors and finalists will inspire the next generation of concert-goers and philanthropists, just as it did for past winner, Hui-Mei Lin, DMA, who explained the impact of the competition on her career and commitment to helping others:

Five years ago, I initiated a scholarship fund at my church to help young musicians who need financial assistance, as I once did. It has been very rewarding for me to be able to pass the generosity down to the next generation of young musicians, and I can't thank the Hartford Symphony enough."

### PAST WINNERS OF HSO'S YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION



Hui-Mei Lin, DMA



Alex Weill



Chelsea Knox

Today, pianist Hui-Mei Lin is an active chamber musician and serves on the faculty of Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT.

Other past HSO winners have gone on to remarkable careers. To name just a few: Jacqui Galluzzo is Associate Principal Second Violin with the Buffalo Philharmonic;

Martha Councill is Assistant Professor of Flute at Western Michigan University; Albert Kim is Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of Central Missouri; Lily Francis is Concertmaster of the Vienna Chamber Orchestra; Alex Weill performs regularly with artists such as Jay Z, Alicia Keys, and Justin Timberlake and has appeared on "Saturday Night Live" and NPR; Kensho Watanabe is Assistant Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra; Gary Kuo is an Emmy Award winning composer and conductor; and Chelsea Knox is the new Principal Flute of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. 

**Be part of the excitement! It's easy! Join our expanding group of donors, and together, let's launch the next rising star! For details and information, please contact Ruth Sovronsky, Director of Development, at 860-760-7321 or [rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org).**

"I left my home in Taiwan when I was 15 with a suitcase, back pack, and \$1000 in my pocket to begin my life here in the United States. My first competition was the Hartford Symphony Orchestra Young Artists Competition. I was fortunate to be awarded the first prize. The honor of winning brought such joy to my family and was even reported in my hometown newspaper. The check of \$1,000 was a great gift towards my education. I am grateful to this day. From there, I received four years of full scholarship to The Hartt College of Music and also The Juilliard School for my Master's degree. Because of all the generosity I received from my benefactors, besides maintaining an active performing career, I have been organizing and performing benefit concerts for different charities over the last 35 years.

# Sparkle!

## A FUN EVENING WITH A SERIOUS MISSION: MUSIC EDUCATION AND SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Whether you opt for a ball gown or black pants, a suit or a tuxedo, you will be dressed just right for **SPARKLE!**, so we hope you'll save the date – and make plans to join us!

This year, HSO's Bravo! Gala will be held on April 27, 2019, at the Connecticut Convention Center. Appropriately named **SPARKLE!**, this year's Gala will celebrate HSO's 75th Anniversary Season. It's a night of fun and feasting, with the orchestra, as always, center stage to provide beautiful music in an intimate setting. But this joyful evening of excellent food and great music has a serious purpose: to raise the critical funds needed to support HSO's vital music education and community programs.

school districts to cut music, HSO's music education programs are especially vital, particularly for the inner-city schools that we serve through our school-day Discovery concerts and our newest Listen, Share, Celebrate program.

Our education and community programs are offered at low cost or no cost to all participants. In order to provide vital services to children and those in need, we need YOU – our donors – to help

us maintain our signature education programs without interruption. Through ticket sales, a silent and live auction, and especially, our "Fund the Inspiration" call for donations, you can help keep music alive in the life of a child in need. Even if you can't attend, consider a special gift earmarked for Gala. It doesn't take much to be the hero in a child's life, but it takes all of us, working together, to keep the music playing. 🎵

### Last season, HSO's community and education programs engaged MORE people

-  **71%** students of color
-  **62%** students on free and reduced lunch
-  **66** schools
-  **24** towns in 5 counties
-  **64%** schools qualify for Title I funding

Our HSO concerts are thrilling for audiences and musicians alike, but music education remains at the heart of everything we do. In a time when funding worries and budget shortfalls force many

## SAVE THE DATE

HARTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA'S BRAVO! GALA  
CELEBRATING OUR DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY – 75 YEARS

# Sparkle!

SATURDAY  
APRIL 27, 2019

CONNECTICUT CONVENTION CENTER | HARTFORD

For more information, contact Ruth Sovronsky at  
rsovrnsky@hartfordsymphony.org or 860-760-7321.

[hartfordsymphony.org/sparkle](http://hartfordsymphony.org/sparkle)



## SPOTLIGHT ON A LEGACY DONOR

# DONORS INSPIRING OTHERS: MEET LEGACY DONOR CONCETTINA LEWIS, MUSIC-LOVER AND PIONEER



TINA LEWIS

**C**oncettina "Tina" Lewis, a regular at Hartford Symphony Orchestra concerts, surprised us with a generous legacy gift upon her passing. Through ongoing conversations with her devoted nephew, Jim Lizzi, we got to know his extraordinary Aunt Tina, who was the first of two women to receive a degree in engineering from the University of Connecticut. The year was 1955, and Tina paved the way for an entire generation of women to enter the field of engineering.

As a female engineering student in a nearly all-male field, Tina helped break new ground. When honored in 2015, the 60th anniversary of her graduation, she spoke candidly about her experience as a female student in an all-male field: "I handed the woman at the counter the list of books for my classes, and she said, 'these are boys' books, dearie' and I said, 'no – these are engineering books!'" Tina, a role model for all of us, explained that choosing a challenging career gave her "the courage to do so many other things that women didn't usually do." Through Jim, we learned that engineering was only one of her passions. Tina's many interests

included architecture, interior design, fine art and music. The beach house she designed for oceanfront property in Misquamicut became her summer home with Blaine, her beloved husband of 45 years, who was also an engineer.

Born in 1933 to Italian-immigrant parents, Tina attended Weaver High School in Hartford. English was her second language, and Tina was only the second in her family to go to college. She studied music from an early age and continued to play piano throughout her life, often providing others with music lessons and even pianos, as her way of sharing the gift of music. According to Jim, Tina loved all opera (except Wagner!), and all forms of

classical music. Her favorite pianist was Alfred Brendl, whom she considered an "all-time superstar."

We are grateful to Jim who helped us "meet" his remarkable aunt. Sadly, because we never knew of Tina's plans to include the Symphony in her estate, we never had the opportunity to personally show our gratitude. But thanks to our new 75 FOR 75 legacy campaign, with a goal of 75 legacy donors in honor of our 75th Anniversary Season, we are meeting more and more individuals and couples who are including our wonderful Symphony in their estate plans. 



Tina Lewis (2nd from left in bottom row) and the 1955 UConn engineering class.

### JOIN THE 75 FOR 75 TEAM - BECOME A MEMBER OF HSO'S ENCORE SOCIETY!

If you've already named the HSO as a beneficiary of a retirement account, a life insurance policy, or another asset, or have included the HSO in your will, you already qualify as one of our 75 FOR 75. Please: let us know so we can express our appreciation!

**Haven't thought about it yet?** We would be happy to chat and share the many ways you can help build a strong and exciting HSO for generations to come.

To share your plans or to ask questions, please contact Ruth Sovronsky, Development Director, at 860-760-7321, or [rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org)



*Alive through great music!*

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact Ruth Sovronsky. Call 860-760-7321 or e-mail [rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org) and provide your e-mail address.