

# QUARTER NOTES

## DE COM POSED

### De-Composed: An exploration of the musicians we should know better!

Are you familiar with Beethoven's famed "Kreutzer" Violin Sonata, often regarded as the "Mount Everest" of violin sonatas? What you may not know is that this challenging piece was originally dedicated to Beethoven's friend and colleague, George Bridgetower, a Black violinist, virtuoso musician, composer, and child prodigy.

In this episode of De-Composed, we explore the life of George Bridgetower, a brilliant musician who studied with Haydn, who took Europe by storm after his first public performance at age seven, and who has been virtually lost to history.

George Bridgetower was born in Biala, Poland on August 13, 1778.<sup>1</sup> His father, John Frederick, was a Black man, believed to have been born in Barbados.<sup>2</sup> John Frederick, a gifted storyteller, reportedly claimed that his own father had been an African prince who was unofficially adopted by a Dutch sea captain with a promise of gold, but was sold into slavery and, after surviving a shipwreck, ended up in Barbados where John Frederick was born.<sup>3</sup> While none of that story has been verified, it is likely that the name Bridgetower was derived from the island's capital, Bridgetown.<sup>4</sup> It is unclear how John Frederick wound up in Poland but he married a white German-Polish woman, Maria Ursula Schmid, and together, they had three children.<sup>5</sup> George was the oldest.

Soon after George's birth, the couple moved to Austria, where a second



George Bridgetower

son, Frederick (who went on to become an accomplished cellist), was born in 1872.<sup>6</sup> John Frederick, who became known as the "Moor", worked as a valet in the household of Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy, employment that was likely made possible because the children's godparents were members of the noble Radziwill family.<sup>7</sup> Prince

Esterhazy, himself a skilled musician, maintained an orchestra at his palace in Eisenstadt, where Josef Haydn worked as the court composer.<sup>8</sup>

John Frederick may have requested lessons for his older son, but Haydn would have recognized and encouraged the gifted George, who was quickly identified as a violin prodigy.<sup>9</sup> George (baptized Hieronymus August Bridgetown) performed his first concert on April 5, 1786, at age seven, and the concert advertisement, which listed George as Haydn's pupil, invited the public to the performance in the "Concert Room of the great Red House,"<sup>10</sup> likely a reference to the concert hall within the Esterhazy palace.

John Frederick left the service of Prince Esterhazy, and in 1788, after moving the family to Mainz, a flourishing music center, embarked

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on a Mozart-styled European tour to promote George's unquestioned musical gifts.<sup>11</sup> Between December of 1788 and March of 1789, young George performed in Germany, Liege, Brussels and the Hague.<sup>12</sup> In April of 1789, at age ten, he performed in Paris as part of the prominent Concert Spirituel series.<sup>13</sup> The concert promotions listed George as "the young Negro of the Colonies."<sup>14</sup> After several more concerts in Paris, including one attended by Thomas Jefferson, John Frederick took his son to tour in England.<sup>15</sup> It is believed that the move was prompted by unstable conditions in France, created by the start of the French Revolution.<sup>16</sup> An account in the Bristol Journal of August 22, 1789 describes a performance by George in Brighton at the time of the birthday celebration of the Prince of Wales.<sup>17</sup> The Prince (who would become the future King George IV) was widely known as a patron to many artists and musicians who came to his court from Europe, so it is entirely likely that John Frederick approached the Prince for help in promoting his son.<sup>18</sup>

In November, father and son traveled to Bath at the invitation of Haydn's friend and celebrated Italian singer, Venanzio Rauzzini.<sup>19</sup> George took the city by storm. More than 550 attendees were at his first concert on December 5<sup>th</sup>, and on Christmas Eve, George was featured as the performer between the second and third parts of Handel's *Messiah*. Before the end of December, he performed two more concerts at the Bristol Assembly room.<sup>20</sup> Given the enormity of his success, George's father seized the moment to introduce his son to London, where he was presented in a variety of concerts, including a repeat of the

*Messiah* performance at the famed Drury Lane Theatre in 1790.<sup>21</sup>

John Frederick, a skilled promoter of his son's considerable talent, dressed in lavish Turkish robes, the fashion of the time, and he represented himself as the son of an African prince.<sup>22</sup> While his stories enthralled the public, certain behaviors created mounting issues. There were rumors of his excessive



George Bridgetower

drinking, womanizing, bad public behavior, and perhaps most appalling, his abuse of his child, as well as gambling away his son's earnings.<sup>23</sup> John Frederick's treatment of his son was so brutal that George sought refuge with the Prince of Wales, who took twelve-year old George under his protection.<sup>24</sup> John Frederick was committed to an asylum, and, ultimately, the Prince had him sent him back to Germany.<sup>25</sup>

Under the protection of the Prince of Wales, George learned from the finest musicians in London.<sup>26</sup> He studied composition, theory and piano as well as violin and formed a close relationship with Giovanni

Battista Viotti, a violinist and composer.<sup>27</sup> George became the first violinist in the Prince's orchestra, and over the course of more than 50 public performances, he played with leading orchestras and musicians, including Haydn and famed double-bass virtuoso Domenico Dragonetti.<sup>28</sup>

George secured permission to travel to Dresden to visit his ailing mother, and he traveled to Vienna in early April of 1803 on the invitation of one of Beethoven's patrons, Prince Lobkowitz, to perform Beethoven's quartets.<sup>29</sup> George's skill as a violinist and royal connections were already well known, so an introduction to Beethoven was easily arranged.<sup>30</sup>

The two formed an instant bond.<sup>31</sup> George was an impressive musician, who, in addition to his musical genius, was fluent in English, German, French, Italian and Polish.<sup>32</sup> Beethoven, then 32, perhaps recognized something of himself in the young 24 year-old violinist.<sup>33</sup> Both suffered at the hands of abusive fathers with vested interests in their careers, and both had the ability to thrill audiences with their astounding talents.<sup>34</sup>

Upon hearing George play, Beethoven suggested that they perform something together at an upcoming concert.<sup>35</sup> Beethoven had already written the first two movements of a violin sonata and now began to compose with Bridgetower in mind.<sup>36</sup> The two men enjoyed nights of drinking, and Bridgetower, who could be high-spirited, encouraged Beethoven's free-wheeling side.<sup>37</sup> The concert was held on May 24, 1803, and when the two musicians took the stage for the morning concert, they had never rehearsed the piece.<sup>38</sup> The piano part was still in sketch form, and Bridgetower was sight-reading



Beethoven's Violin Sonata, with dedication to George Bridgetower

throughout the performance.<sup>39</sup> At one point, Bridgetower surprised Beethoven by improvising and imitating the short piano cadenza in the first movement, whereupon Beethoven jumped up and hugged him, crying, "My dear boy! Once more!"<sup>40</sup> After the performance, Beethoven presented Bridgetower with his tuning fork and immediately wrote a dedication on the score, "Mulatto sonata composed for the mulatto Bridgetower, great lunatic and mulatto composer."<sup>41</sup>

As you read, please enjoy listening to the famed Beethoven sonata, performed by violinist Maxim Vengerov and pianist Polina Osetinskaya in 2022: [Vengerov and Osetinskaya play Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata for Violin and Piano \(2022\) - YouTube](#)

But when the sonata was published, it bore a dedication to French violinist Rudolphe Kreutzer, and then became known as the Kreutzer Sonata. What happened to the Bridgetower dedication? Unfortunately, George had unwittingly insulted the reputation of a woman that Beethoven knew, and Beethoven

was infuriated.<sup>42</sup> He immediately withdrew the dedication to Bridgetower, and never again spoke to Bridgetower.<sup>43</sup> And there is yet another tragedy: when Kreutzer received the manuscript dedicated in his honor, he took one look at it, declared it unplayable, and never once performed the sonata in public.<sup>44</sup>

George returned to London, where he was joined by his younger brother, Frederick, a skilled cellist.<sup>45</sup> In London, they performed a concert together on May 23, 1805, and Frederick later moved to Ireland, where he married Elizabeth Guy.<sup>46</sup> Frederick and Elizabeth lived in Dublin, where Frederick taught cello and piano, composed and arranged music and organized many concerts.<sup>47</sup>

For his part, George remained well-respected in England.<sup>48</sup> In 1807, he was elected to the Royal Society of Musicians in London and was awarded a Bachelor of Music in 1811 at Trinity Hall, Cambridge University.<sup>49</sup> George taught piano and was a member of the Philharmonic Society.<sup>50</sup> He married Mary Leake

on March 9, 1816, a wealthy young woman, and they had two daughters, Julia (who died at one year of age in 1818) and Felicia, who was born a year later in 1819.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, there were problems in the marriage and by 1824, Mary was living in Rome with their daughter.<sup>52</sup> George never reconciled with his wife, and Mary died in Italy in 1835.<sup>53</sup>

George continued to teach, but he ceased performing in public.<sup>54</sup> He travelled throughout Europe, and letters document him in Rome, London, Vienna, and Paris at varying times between 1825 and 1848.<sup>55</sup> His friends included other famed musicians, including Camille Saint-Saëns, Thomas Attwood and Samuel Wesley.<sup>56</sup>

No longer in the spotlight, the public eventually forgot George Bridgetower. In the 1850s, almost unknown, he moved to Peckham, then a semi-rural area with easy access to London.<sup>57</sup> Though he passed away on February 29, 1860, he did not die penniless or friendless.<sup>58</sup> His estate, managed by Mr. Samuel Appleby, an amateur violinist, reportedly included two Stradivarius violins, a violincello, a viola and a box of musical glasses.<sup>59</sup> Friends arranged for Bridgetower to be buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, touted as "Britain's most prestigious cemetery,"<sup>60</sup> and Bridgetower's friends paid for his tombstone.<sup>61</sup>

Few of Bridgetower's compositions have survived, and some have been attributed to other musicians.<sup>62</sup> Sadly, an accurate and complete biography of this talented musician is long overdue to correct false information and to remove any inventions created by his father to promote his early performances.<sup>63</sup>

# THE MUSICIAN HOST PROGRAM:

## Please meet John Michael Flavetta, HSO's assistant principal French Horn, and the new Coordinator of HSO's Highly Successful Musician Host Program

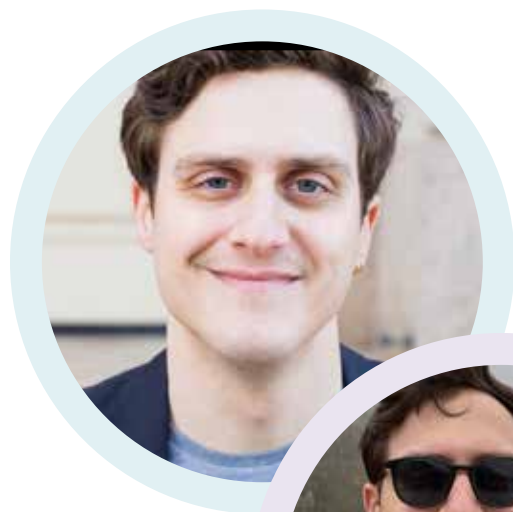
**N**ow in its seventh full year, HSO's Musician Host program is a favorite among hosts and musicians alike. The bonds formed between musicians and hosts build enduring relationships and create a community of friends who love the Hartford Symphony.

The program, previously under the expert management of Arthur Masi, a violist of the HSO, will now be managed by Assistant Principal French Horn John Michael Flavetta. We sat down to talk with him about his vision for the Symphony and the importance of the Musician Host Program.

**QN: You are part of the dynamic young musician leadership at the HSO, and we are so grateful that you stepped forward to take responsibility to continue our Musician Host Program.**

**JM:** I know firsthand how important this is, as I used the host program when I first began with the HSO. I know the difference that it made for me as a young musician, driving from Boston and worrying about where I would stay and how I could practice. Staying with a host family made me feel safe, secure and protected. I will never forget that.

**QN: You are the perfect person to lead the Host Program because you have always been clear that the HSO's priority must be to connect**



**directly with ALL the people in our community.**

**JM:** I think that the most important thing we can do as a symphony is to connect directly with our community and our supporters. A symphony is all about making a connection, and our audience should feel that sense of connection, as well as pride and ownership in their "hometown" symphony, the same as you'd feel about a local ball team. We have to show people WHY we are here and WHY we are important. The HSO should be part of the "buzz" that is happening in our city – and that's what excites me the most.

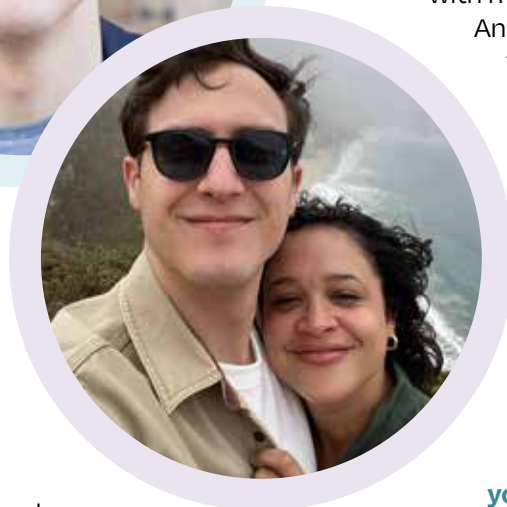
**QN: Is your desire to connect with the audiences a factor that**

**prompted you to accept the role as the coordinator of the program?**

**JM:** Absolutely. The Host Program is one of the best ways to forge bonds. It's certainly not the only way, but it is quite powerful. I LOVE meeting our audience members because, as a musician, I want to KNOW the people I'm playing for. Knowing that I am playing for people I've met, who have become friends, is so much more powerful than simply walking out onto a stage and performing for strangers. As I began to place musicians with host families for this season, I've been in contact with many of the hosts.

And now I'm looking forward to meeting them all in person and connecting their names with faces.

**QN: What is very special about you is that you immediately volunteered to be part of Forte, our young professional group.**



**JM:** Forte is an excellent new addition, and it has enormous potential. With the new round of auditions, we have a number of new, young musicians who live in Connecticut, and they will be invited to be part of Forte. I love sitting with the Forte group before a performance, and many had no idea I was one of the musicians! I am no different from them – and they are excited by the fact that in a few minutes, they will see me up on the concert stage. There should be no "walls" between musicians and the audience. As a musician, I crave every opportunity to interact with



John Michael and Geanna

people. Our performances at the Parkville Market are very special because the audience and musicians get a chance to mingle together without barriers. The strength of the HSO is people – and people have to get to know us to make the connection.

**QN: You've become a great Hartford cheerleader. Can you tell us why?**

**JM:** What makes Hartford so special is the enormous diversity of the people and the incredible accessibility. I have so much confidence and faith in our community that my wife and I have chosen to make our home here. Hartford is a small city with amazing art, history and beauty. We have our own symphony, great restaurants, exciting bars, jazz music, multiple theaters, ballparks and THREE sports teams! We have everything we need to be one of the best cities, and I want the Hartford Symphony to be part of all of that, so I'm thrilled to do my part both on and off the stage.

The HSO is so grateful to John Michael for his energy

*"Our hosting experiences have brought vivid insights into our musicians' passions. Our appreciation for their commitment and artistry has been magnified with engaging conversations. With each concert we attend, we feel an increased personal connection to the orchestra. We always comment to each other when we see one of our house guests, now one of our friends. It's been an experience not to be missed!"*

Timothy and Barb Mitchell, hosts to a varied number of HSO musicians

and his commitment. And, he'd be delighted to chat with you about the hosting program. He can be reached at [jmflavetta@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:jmflavetta@hartfordsymphony.org)

The auditions held this season have ushered in 18 new young musicians (violin, viola, cello and bass) to the HSO, and there are upcoming auditions for trumpet and percussion. With exciting new musicians in our ranks, we will need more hosts to become part of our community. It's the BEST way to meet the musicians and create new – and lasting friendships.

Enthusiastic comments from participating hosts have encouraged others to join:

*"(Hosting)... has been an absolutely amazing and sensational experience for us. As much as Marshall and I have felt committed to the HSO over the years, getting to know not only Brian, but several of the other musicians, has given us an opportunity to engage, learn, and understand more of what makes this organization so very special."*

Sandra & Marshall Rulnick, hosts to HSO's principal trombone, Brian Diehl

**We are continually working to enlarge our roster of hosts.** If you have an extra private bedroom in your home with a separate private bathroom, plus an inquisitive nature that delights in meeting new people and expanding your horizons, you fit the definition of a perfect HSO host. Want to be part of the HSO host network? Just say yes! Contact Eric Hutchinson, Director of Development, for more information and details at 860-760-7321 or [ehutchinson@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:ehutchinson@hartfordsymphony.org)



# Welcome Melissa White

## HSO's Joyce C. Willis Artist In Residence for 2023-2024

**W**hen you attend a performance of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra this season, please pay special attention to Melissa White, who will be joining us as the Joyce C. Willis Artist-In Residence, a position made possible by a generous grant from The Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation.

In late 2020, The Roberts Foundation announced the Joyce C. Willis Fund for Excellence and Equity in the Arts, a visionary initiative to support Black artists, named in honor of Joyce C. Willis, a former board member of the Roberts Foundation, a former board member of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, and a founding member and past board president of the Amistad Center for Art and Culture. The Hartford Symphony Orchestra was honored to be selected as one of the participating organizations, alongside Hartford Stage and the Amistad Center. Willis, an ardent supporter of all three organizations, retired from The Hartford Financial Services Group as Vice President of Corporate Communications in 2005, but sadly, she passed away in June 2020 from Covid-19.

The HSO is especially delighted at the chance to welcome American violinist Melissa White, who has enchanted audiences and critics around the world as both a soloist and a chamber musician. Her

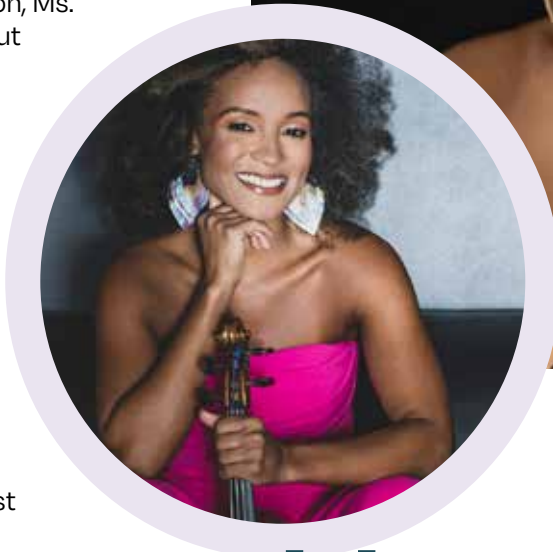


February 2020 performance with the National Philharmonic was deemed "absolutely breathtaking" by Maryland Theatre Guide critic Katie Gaab, who cited the "grace, precision, and warmth" of her playing in Florence Price's Violin Concerto No. 1. Reviewing the same concert for The Washington Post, Matthew Guerrieri

called her "an excellent advocate, prioritizing ease and fluency over intensity, suiting the music's lyric and episodic nature."

What is particularly exciting is the fact that HSO's collaboration with Melissa White began almost twenty years ago. "Twenty years ago, The Roberts Foundation funded HSO's Martin Luther King concerts at First Cathedral in Bloomfield," said Lisa M. Curran, executive director of The Roberts Foundation. "One of those concerts featured a teenage Melissa White. We are delighted to welcome her back to Hartford and know she will make a significant impact on all audiences next season."

As the Joyce C. Willis Artist in Residence at the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Melissa will perform as a soloist, alongside the orchestra in two Masterworks Concerts and in a solo recital in partnership with the Garmany Chamber Music Series at The Hartt School. One of the many activities planned for Melissa is hosting panel discussions on pertinent topics in the arts. In addition, she will work closely with string students from underserved communities in the region. During this 2023/24 season, Ms. White will also debut as a soloist with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and Buffalo Philharmonic, in addition to appearances with the Charlotte Symphony, Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, and West



more information on Melissa White, visit [melissawhiteviolin.com](https://melissawhiteviolin.com).

## “grace, precision, and warmth”

Virginia Symphony Orchestra. “It’s an honor to be the Hartford Symphony Orchestra’s 2023-2024 Joyce C. Willis Artist in Residence. I’m looking forward to getting to know the Hartford community, engaging with local students, and performing meaningful concerts with the HSO,” said Melissa.

In addition to her musical career, Melissa has been practicing various

styles of yoga for more than a decade. She has completed training in both Vinyasa and Ashtanga at Sampurna Yoga School in Goa, India. She is the co-founder of Intermission, a groundbreaking program that unites body, mind, breath, and music-making through yoga and meditation. The program comprises sessions for students and retreats for professionals. She will incorporate her practice into her residency at the HSO. For

Melissa joins the previously announced Joyce C. Willis Artists in Residence, namely Christopher D. Betts at Hartford Stage and Merik Goma at The Amistad Center for Art & Culture, each of whom have three-year engagements with their respective organizations. “We are fortunate to continue to honor the legacy of Joyce C. Willis with our second Artist in Residence at the HSO, Melissa White. Her enthusiasm and passion for her craft engages and excites audiences around the world, and we are looking forward to celebrating the HSO’s 80th season with Melissa,” said Steve Collins, President & CEO of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. 

# PASSING THE BATON:

## HSO's New Director of Development, Eric Hutchinson!

**W**ith Ruth Sovronsky's retirement as full-time Director of Development of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, we welcome her successor, Eric Hutchinson, who has been with the HSO development team for nearly four years. The conversation between Ruth and Eric explores the exciting challenges and opportunities ahead.



Development Director Eric Hutchinson with Ruth Sovronsky

**Ruth: It was my dream job to work with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, so my decision to step down was not easy. We've worked together so you know how much work is involved. What motivated you to apply for the job?**

**Eric:** Bluntly, my love of the Hartford Symphony. As I was born in Connecticut, the Symphony has always been part of my life. I am still in awe of what we achieve both musically and for the community, and I knew that I had to be part of everything that the future holds.

**Ruth: When I joined the Symphony in 2014, our primary goal was financial security. What do you hope to achieve?**

**Eric:** Financial stability is an ongoing challenge, so it remains my primary objective. But beyond that, I'm especially interested in the innovative ways we are finding to present music to lure new audiences. Symphonies, like all art, must continually evolve to survive. We have an imperative to reflect the community we

serve and to fulfill their artistic and cultural needs. This could mean new repertoire or new ways of presenting music. It's always a balancing act between preserving tradition and forging new paths. We must take steps to ensure that this amazing Symphony is here for new generations to discover, and I'm excited to be part of that.

**Ruth: What I loved best about the HSO was the people, and the joy in building wonderful relationships with our audience members, our donors. At every education concert, I was mesmerized by the faces of the students who enjoyed our concerts and programs. Watching a child's face light up, as they pretend to play a violin or mimic the conductor's arms, always brought me joy. What excites you the most?**

**Eric:** What you said! Getting to meet such wonderful people is energizing. In my past jobs as a professional musician and a community leader

with the YMCA, forming relationships was always thrilling. I love meeting our donors and hearing each person's stories, passions, and the history of their connections to the HSO. I never cease to be amazed by the deep personal commitment of our donors and the longevity of their relationship with the HSO. I know this is the "secret

sauce" that has kept the HSO going for 80 years!

**Ruth: While I play the piano and love music, I cannot claim to be a musician. But you are a professional musician, who graduated from the Berklee College of Music. Does being a musician help you in this new position?**

**Eric:** I am keenly aware of the work it takes to play music at such a high level, so I have enormous respect for each of our musicians. I know how much dedication they've poured into their art. I'm grateful to have the chance to support the musicians in every way necessary, so that we can continue to create the great music that is a gift to all.

**Ruth: The HSO seems to attract the most amazing staff. Everyone is always willing to help one another, which makes this a very special place to work. Now you get to lead the team!**





Eric in performance on drumset

**Eric:** We have “magic” at the HSO, and as the new head of Development, I trust the choices we’ve made together in building the remarkable team we have: Deb Shulansky (Assistant Manager of Donor Engagement), Noa Michaud (Assistant Manager of Development Operations) and our newest member, Rob Beasley (Corporate and Foundation Relations Manager.) I just have to get out of the way and allow our remarkable colleagues to do the job that each was hired to do. Recognizing the unique passions and strengths of each team member is important, and I have made it a priority to ensure that each has opportunities for growth and professional development, so that we play to everyone’s strengths. And it goes without saying that I must be open and receptive to all team feedback so that I can become the best leader possible.

**Ruth:** I am so impressed by the work you did in creating Forte, our young professional group. Your ongoing involvement with Forte is critical to the future of the HSO.

**Eric:** I am very proud of what Forte has accomplished. Over the past three years, Forte has expanded and has created a new sense of community

with the 20, 30 and 40-something crowd. People don’t realize how many music lovers are out there, just waiting for the chance to be invited to be an “insider.” Forte also offers regular opportunities for social and professional networking. We have strong voluntary leadership for Forte, and this is the group that is the gateway to the future, developing the next generation of symphony attendees and supporters.



**Ruth:** Eric, you have already won the hearts of so many. Under your leadership, I know that the symphony is in good hands and I thank you for all you’ve done and will continue to do!

### About Eric:

A percussionist, who graduated from Berklee College of Music in Boston, Eric enjoyed a career as a professional musician for a number of years, sharing the stage with Livingston Taylor, Aretha Franklin and Wynton Marsalis, among others. He holds a bachelor’s degree in professional music with a triple concentration in music education, performance, and songwriting, “thanks to many late nights and tons of pizza.” Eric has served as a high school band director in Vernon, Norwich, Killingly and Putnam. He continues to be a performing musician (both on percussion and keyboard) and can “moonlight as a pianist” if asked. Eric spent 10 years in executive leadership roles at the YMCA, including his time as Executive Director of the YMCA of Greater Hartford. As an arranger, Eric’s music has been performed by high school and college bands around the country, including the bands of Walt Disney World’s Magic Music Days Parade. Eric serves on the Board of Governors for the Greater Hartford Arts Council, and is the Board Chair for “Rob The Drummer Educational Programs,” a nonprofit dedicated to music education programs for youth. Eric lives in North Granby with his family that includes his twin 5-year-olds, Will and Amelia, their 10-year-old sister Annabel, and their wonderful mother, Rebecca.

Eric would love to meet all of you, so please feel free to drop him a line at [ehutchinson@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:ehutchinson@hartfordsymphony.org), or call him at 860-760-7321.

## SOUND BITES: A SLICE OF HSO HISTORY

# Jacques Gordon:

## the connective tissue between Hartford Symphony Orchestra and Music Mountain, the music venue in Falls Village, Connecticut

Jacques Gordon, the second conductor of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra<sup>64</sup> from 1936 to 1938, came to the United States from his birthplace in Odessa, Russia. Born on March 7, 1899, Gordon was a child prodigy, who graduated from the Imperial Conservatory at Odessa in 1912 at the age of thirteen.<sup>65</sup> He emigrated to the United States where he continued his music studies at the Institute of Musical Art in New York City, the forerunner to the Juilliard School.

The Institute of Musical Arts was founded in 1905 by Frank Damrosch, godson of composer Franz Liszt, who served as head of music education for the New York City public schools.

Damrosch had the idea to create a music conservatory in the United States that would permit highly talented musicians to gain advanced musical training without having to travel abroad.<sup>66</sup>

Gordon made his debut as a violinist in 1911 in Berlin.<sup>67</sup> At the age of nineteen, just a few years after his arrival in the United States,

Gordon became one of the original members of the Berkshire String Quartet, but, within two years, he left to form his own quartet, the Gordon String Quartet.<sup>68</sup> In 1921, at the young age of twenty-one, Gordon became Concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and, during his tenure, he taught violin at the American Conservatory in Chicago.<sup>69</sup> In 1930, he resigned from the orchestra to focus on his work with the quartet. Through

Gordon's relationship with Julius Rosenwald, the chairman of the well-known Chicago-based company, Sears, Roebuck & Co., and with the financial backing of other prominent Chicago citizens, Gordon created Music Mountain, a new music venue for chamber music in Falls Village, CT. The first concert at the new venue, on

August 22, 1930, featured the Gordon Quartet. Music Mountain became the permanent home of the Gordon String Quartet, and the venue embraced a mission to teach and perform string quartet literature. In 1942, Jacques Gordon was named head of the violin department at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., and the Gordon String Quartet continued under the



sponsorship of the Eastman School.<sup>70</sup> Gordon suffered a stroke and collapsed while playing a violin concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra on May 4, 1947.<sup>71</sup> His health declined. At just 49 years of age, Gordon died on September 15, 1948, in Hartford, Connecticut. He was buried in the Music Mountain cemetery.

The campus of Music Mountain includes the main building, Gordon Hall, where concerts are held to this day. Designed as an "acoustically perfect chamber music hall", Gordon Hall's long and narrow shape was created to replicate the structure of a violin, with nothing to impede the ability of the walls, floor and ceiling to vibrate when music is played on the stage.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the property includes four separate houses, each named after an instrument in a string quartet. The houses were prefabricated buildings, ordered from Sears Roebuck and built in 1930. Given the impressive architecture of Gordon Hall and the relatively rare examples of mail-order houses, the property has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. 



STAFF SPOTLIGHT:

# Veronica Sanchez

## Staff Accountant

Veronica joined the HSO in March of 2023, and she's a perfect fit with the team! While she's invariably "behind the scenes," she's an essential part of the daily operations of the Hartford Symphony, and we could not exist without her.

**QN: Tell us a little bit about your family and your journey.**

I was born in Waterbury, where I lived for most of my life. My parents met in Puerto Rico when they were 17 years old and moved to Connecticut. They spoke no English when they arrived here, but they were determined, and they learned the language very well. I'm the middle child and I have two brothers. I have a business degree from Western Connecticut University. After working with Ethan Allen, I got a great job with Louis Dreyfus Commodities. That's where I learned the most about my field – and met my husband!

**QN: We've met your gorgeous family – please introduce them!**

My husband and I were married in 2013 and we have two very wonderful children, Xavier and Jayda. I became a stay-at-home mom when they were born. And we have a wonderful dog named Link, who just turned three.

**QN: The HSO was your first job back after being a full-time mom! Why did you choose the HSO?**

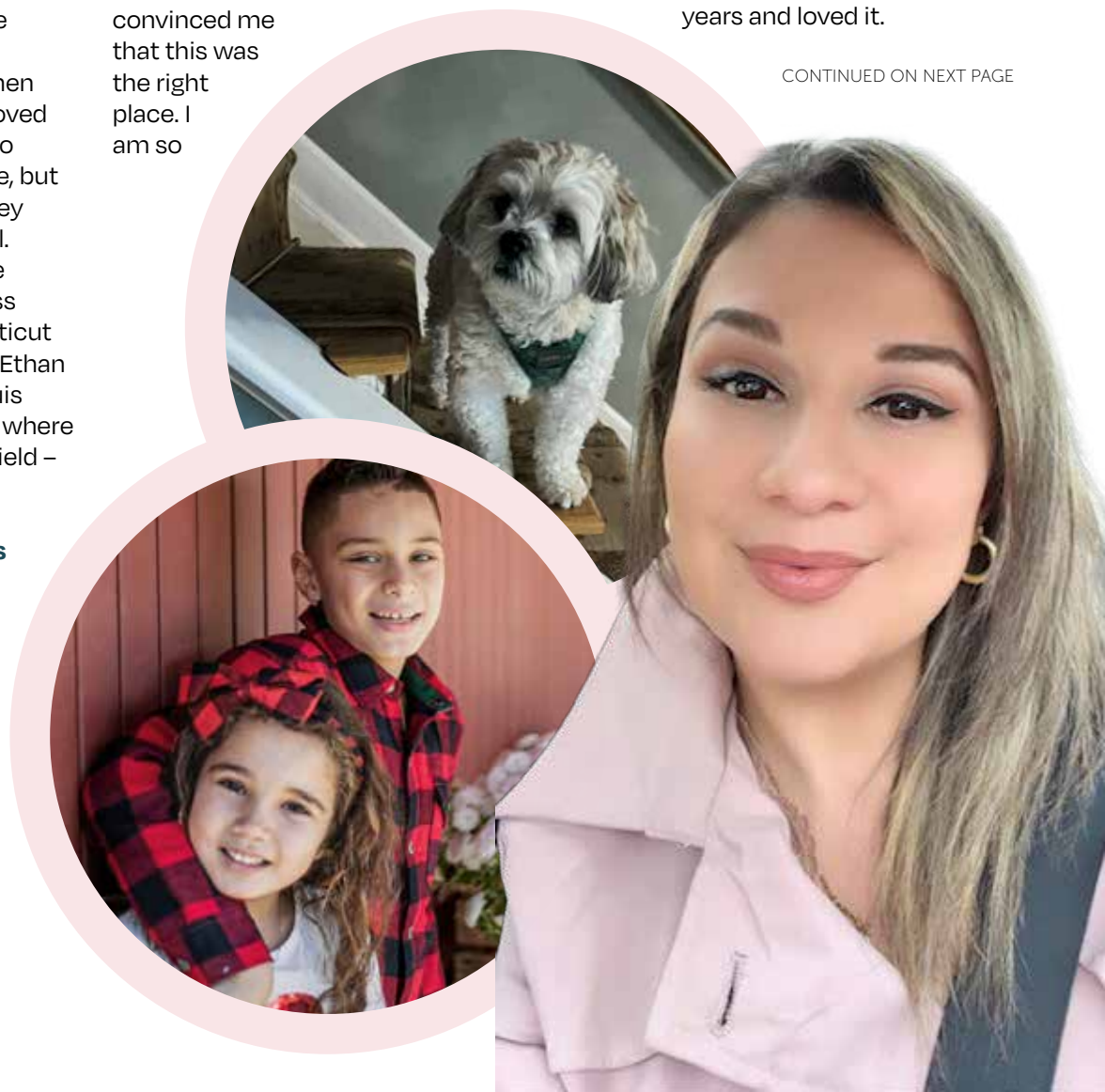
It's the mission and the people. I began with HSO as a "temp" and I was thrilled to be offered the job. My job is not just about "crunching numbers" – it's about the artistry, the mission and the people. I had never worked for a non-profit, but what I found here convinced me that this was the right place. I am so

proud to be part of an organization that takes its commitment to serve the community very seriously.

**QN: Many people who work at the HSO have some connection to music. Do you?**

I played flute for 8 years, and when I was in high school, I was given the chance to play in a Youth Symphony in New York. But my mom was very nervous at the thought of my traveling back and forth to New York City each week, so I had to turn down the offer. But my love of music is very deep. I played with the high school orchestra throughout my school years and loved it.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE




**QN: What are some of your most enjoyable free time activities?**

I love reading (one of my favorite authors is Stephen King) and playing video games! My children (six and eight years old) enjoy beaches, amusement parks, and swimming. Xavier is very involved in sports, and now Jayda is enjoying all kinds of dance – ballet, tap and jazz. And my other favorite thing to do is cook.



**QN: What do you like to cook?**

I especially enjoy cooking Spanish cuisine, and one favorite is Carne Guisada – a beef stew with olives, unique seasonings, and a base called sofrito that every Puerto Rican household makes from scratch and uses in their cooking. You can usually find the recipes for Carne Guisada online, but my recipe for sofrito is my secret. I make it in batches and then freeze it, to be added to various dishes.

**QN:** While we wouldn't dream of asking Veronica to share her sofrito recipe, we did find a recipe online, and we've included it with Veronica's approval! Enjoy! 

**Recipe for Sofrito**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 yellow onion roughly chopped
- 1 red bell pepper seeded & chopped
- 1 green bell pepper seeded & chopped
- 1 garlic head
- 14 ají dulce seeded & chopped
- 10 leaves cilantro
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp oregano ground
- 1/3 cup olive oil extra virgin

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Start off by roughly chopping the yellow onion. Continue doing the same and removing the seeds from the red bell pepper, green bell pepper, and the ají dulces.

Place the chopped ingredients into a food large sized food processor or blender.

Break apart the garlic head into cloves and peel away the outer papery skin. Place the garlic cloves and cilantro leaves into the food processor or blender.

Add a tbsp of salt, black pepper, and oregano. Lastly, add the 1/3 cup of olive oil and blend everything together.

**RECIPE NOTES**

The ají dulce is also called aji cachucha and is very hard to find at the grocery stores. They are usually found at a vegetable market or a Hispanic/Latin supermarkets. You may use mini sweet peppers instead if you cannot find these ají dulce peppers. Be careful when blending with a high powered food processor or blender because it will become too puréed. To reduce water content, strain the blended sofrito mixture before storing.

To store, it is a common practice to spread it out in an ice cube tray and freeze the sofrito. Then, place sofrito cubes into a ziplock freezer bag for long-term storage.

## MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT:

# Justin Ruleman

## French Horn

**QN: So many musicians come from musical families. Tell us a bit about your family background.**

Well, I guess I'm unusual in that no one in my family was musical at all! I was born in Mobile, Alabama and lived there until I was a toddler, when my family moved to Houston, Texas.

**QN: How did you chose French Horn as your instrument?**

Positive peer pressure! I played sports with a group of friends, and some of them played French Horn. In fifth grade, someone told me that if I wanted to get a college scholarship I should consider oboe, bassoon or French Horn. I could not make a sound on the oboe, and since my friends were playing French Horn, I decided on that. I started in 6th grade. Since music in Texas is directly connected to football and well-funded, there must have been 20 French Horn players in my 6th grade class. We had strong competition, which makes you want to play even better.

**QN: Did you have good teachers and mentors?**

I did – and that's another reason why I was able to succeed. I was lucky enough to Scott Strong as my teacher, while he was still a student at Rice University. He now plays with the Detroit Symphony. Being near Rice University gave me a pipeline to great teachers, and that made an enormous difference in my life – and my career. I became the first in my family to go to college directly from high school.

**Last season, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra welcomed French Horn player, Justin Ruleman. As Justin has now been with the symphony for nearly six months, a “get to know you” interview with him was long overdue.**

**QN: Tell us more about your academic journey.**

I attended Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. I majored in music performance with a minor in business. I was also part of an inaugural program at Texas Tech which offered a certificate in arts entrepreneurship, with a focus on arts administration. After graduation, I went directly to Northwestern for my masters degree and finished in 2020. It was a bit of a challenge since the pandemic shut down everything in the Spring of my second year, so I had to complete my degree remotely.

**QN: Is the Hartford Symphony position your first job as a musician?**

Actually, no. While at Northwestern, I won a job with the Coast Guard, which is a very competitive audition. I began that job in January of 2020, so I was already traveling between Chicago and CT. I still play with the Coast Guard, and I'm now delighted to be with the Hartford Symphony, as my musical life is centered in Connecticut.

**QN: Can you tell us about your family?**


My wife, Emily Barrows, is a 7th grade English teacher. We met as students at Texas Tech. She was an English major and a singer. Emily joined me in Connecticut in September of 2020, right after we got married. She now teaches at Plainfield Middle School, and we live in Norwich. And we have a rescue dog – a Pyrenean cattle dog mix named Lady. She must love classical music, because as soon as I start to practice she goes right to sleep!



**QN: What do you do for fun?**

I still love sports and I enjoy soccer and baseball. I really enjoy my morning kayaking trips on Lake Gardiner, and I've been regularly enjoying the jet ski that I bought about 18 months ago. Emily and I both love hiking. This past spring, we visited Alaska, where we did an ATV tour of the Knik Glacier, and hiked in Denali National Park. I've also begun to read more: I'm currently really enjoying anything by Kurt Vonnegut and J.R. Tolkien (The Hobbit, and Lord of the Rings.)

**QN: And our very last question: what's on your playlist right now?**

It changes every week, but at the moment, I'm listening to Tyler Childers (a great guitarist and vocalist) and German folk/pop music, even though I barely understand a word of German! I like hearing the sounds of language as a musical concept, without the need to understand the lyrics. 

Endnotes:

1 <a href="#">The Black Violinist Who Inspired Beethoven</a> - <a href="#">The New York Times (nytimes.com)</a>	11 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	24 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	34 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	46 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	61 <a href="#">George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860)   The Peckham Society</a>
2 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	12 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	25 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	35 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	47 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	47 <a href="#">Ibid</a>
3 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	13 <a href="#">The Black Violinist Who Inspired Beethoven</a> - <a href="#">The New York Times (nytimes.com)</a>	26 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	36 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	48 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	62 <a href="#">Ibid</a>
4 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	14 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	27 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	37 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	49 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	63 <a href="#">Ibid</a>
5 <a href="#">George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860)   The Peckham Society</a>	15 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	28 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	38 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	50 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	64 <a href="#">The first conductor of the Hartford Symphony was band leader Angelo Coniglione.</a>
6 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	16 <a href="#">George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860)   The Peckham Society</a>	29 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	39 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	51 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	65 <a href="#">Gordon, Jacques   Encyclopedia.com</a>
7 <a href="#">The Black Violinist Who Inspired Beethoven</a> - <a href="#">The New York Times (nytimes.com)</a>	17 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	30 <a href="#">George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860)   The Peckham Society</a>	40 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	52 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	66 <a href="#">A Brief History   The Juilliard School</a>
8 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	18 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	31 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	41 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	53 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	67 <a href="#">Gordon, Jacques   Encyclopedia.com</a>
9 <a href="#">George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860)   The Peckham Society</a>	19 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	32 <a href="#">https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/george-bridgetower-violinist-composer-fell-out-with-beethoven/</a>	42 <a href="#">https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/george-bridgetower-violinist-composer-fell-out-with-beethoven/</a>	54 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	68 <a href="#">Ibid</a>
10 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	20 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	33 <a href="#">The Black Violinist Who Inspired Beethoven</a> - <a href="#">The New York Times (nytimes.com)</a>	43 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	55 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	69 <a href="#">Ibid</a>
	21 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	34 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	44 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	56 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	70 <a href="#">Ibid</a>
	22 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	35 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	45 <a href="#">George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860)   The Peckham Society</a>	57 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	71 <a href="#">Ibid</a>
	23 <a href="#">The Black Violinist Who Inspired Beetho-</a>	36 <a href="#">Ibid</a>		58 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	72 <a href="#">Music Mountain   About Music Mountain</a>
		37 <a href="#">Ibid</a>		59 <a href="#">Ibid</a>	
		38 <a href="#">Ibid</a>		60 <a href="#">The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery</a>	



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