



HARTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

AUTUMN 2024

QUARTER NOTES

WELCOME CLAYTON STEPHENSON, 2024-25 JOYCE C. WILLIS ARTIST IN RESIDENCE!

As we begin HSO's 2024/25 season, we welcome our newest Joyce C. Willis Artist in Residence, pianist Clayton Stephenson, the first Black finalist at the prestigious Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2022. Clayton's residency with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra is made possible by a generous grant from The Roberts Foundation For The Arts in memory of Joyce C. Willis, a champion of diversity and excellence in the arts, and a former Board member of both the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and The Roberts Foundation.

In the spring of 2023, Clayton graduated from the dual degree program at Harvard-New England Conservatory with a bachelor's degree in economics from Harvard and a master's degree in piano performance from NEC. While still in school, Clayton was named a Gillmore Young Artist in 2022, a prize awarded every two years to a young pianist. The Gillmore prize includes a \$15,000 stipend plus \$10,000 towards the commission of a new piano composition. Just a few months ago, in March of



Pianist **Clayton Stephenson**

2024, Clayton was awarded the Avery Fisher career grant, which includes professional assistance and recognition, along with a \$25,000 prize. Clayton is a star whose time is now, and we are so lucky to have him spend the coming season with the HSO.

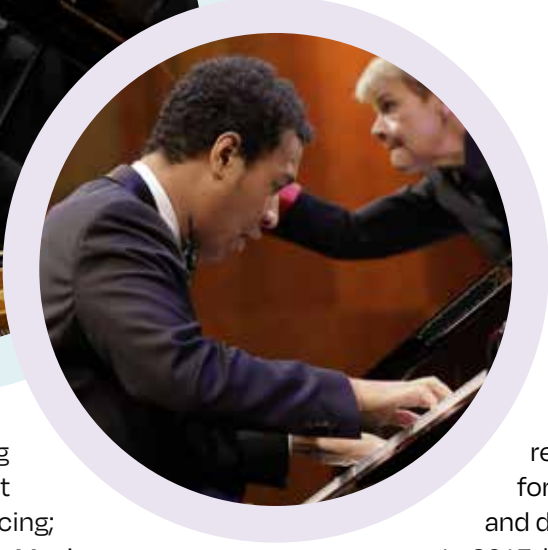
Clayton grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and thanks to music programs designed to serve the youth of New

York City, Clayton began his journey in music at the Third Street Music School Settlement, a supplemental music education program for youngsters. [About • Third Street](#) He began piano lessons at age 7 and the following year, he was accepted into the Juilliard Outreach Music Advancement Program for children from under-served communities, where he attended numerous student recitals and, as he puts it, fell in love with music. At the age of ten he advanced to Juilliard's elite Pre-College program with the help of his teacher, Beth Nam. At Juilliard he studied with Matti Raekallio, Hung-Kuang Chen and Ernest Barretta.

Clayton practiced on a synthesizer at home until he found an old upright piano on the street that an elementary school had thrown away. That was the piano that became his practice piano at home for the next six years, until the Lang Lang Foundation donated a new piano to him when he was 17.

As he describes it: "The Third Street Music School jump-started my music

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education; the Young People's Choir taught me phrasing and voicing; the Juilliard Outreach Music Advancement Program introduced me to formal and rigorous piano training, which enabled me to get into Juilliard Pre-College; the Morningside Music Bridge validated my talent and elevated my self-confidence; the Boy's Club of New York exposed me to jazz; and the Lang Lang Foundation brought me to stages worldwide and transformed me from a piano student to a young artist." Along the way, Clayton was

recognized for his talent and dedication.

In 2015, he won prizes at the Cliburn Junior International Piano Competition and in 2016, he won prizes at the Cooper International Piano Competition and received the Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award from NPR's well-known program that focuses on talent youth, *From the Top*. [Clayton Stephenson - From the Top](#) In 2017, he was named a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts. According to his profile on NPR's *From The Top*, outside of

music, then 17-year-old Clayton enjoyed swimming, learning about public speaking, and doing magic tricks.

Recent career highlights for Clayton include concertos with the Houston and North Carolina Symphonies and the Las Vegas Philharmonic; festival appearances at Grand Teton and Tippet Rise; recitals at venues including Foundation Louis Vuitton and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall; and collaborations with violinists Nikki and Timothy Chooi in Europe, Canada, and the United States. On the 69th United Nations Day, Clayton played with the International Youth Orchestra at the U.N. General Assembly Hall. He has been featured on NPR, WUOL, and WQXR, and appeared in the "GRAMMY® Salute to Classical Music" Concert at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium.

We are all in for a treat in the 2024/2025, and if you want to sample Clayton's energy, emotion and obvious talent, just watch his performance at the 2022 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition: [Clayton Stephenson – GERSHWIN Piano Concerto in F Major – 2022 Cliburn Competition - YouTube](#) 



Clayton, welcome to the HSO!

Meet the newest members of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra!

During the 23/24 season that concluded with the Talcott Mountain Summer Music Festival, the HSO welcomed ELEVEN new musicians to the orchestra. Auditions held for violin, viola, cello, double bass, and oboe produced a remarkable number of incredibly gifted musicians, who competed for very few coveted positions. The pool of musical talent was impressive, and the musicians who won their jobs this past Spring are the best of the best. In the summer edition of *Quarter Notes*, we highlighted Michael Duffett, our new Principal Second Violin, but there are ten other musicians we'd love for you to meet.

With the opening of our new season, please be sure to look for all of them on stage, in the audience, or wandering in the halls before or after performances. Be sure to make them all feel at home. We are delighted to include them in the HSO family.

Please meet five of our six new violinists:

Jamie Andrusyak, first violin, was born in Seoul, Korea. She's the only musician in the family, but her family's love of classical music introduced her to the art form at a very young age. Jamie has multiple interests beyond music, a testament to her creativity and curiosity: crocheting, cooking cuisines from around the world, board games, and fostering kittens (and she has two cats of her own). One of her cats,



Bocal, has become a well-known model for numerous cat food and cat litter companies, and Bocal's Instagram page has gone viral! (See: [Bocal the Cat \(@bocalcat\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)) Jamie

is also an accomplished oboist and her husband, Erik, is the new principal oboist with the Hartford Symphony! (His bio is below.)

Michael Eby, first violin, was born in Redding, California and his mother is a violinist. He is a lifelong car enthusiast and when not practicing, can often be found driving or working on his treasured car, a 1997 BMW Z3.



Joelle Key, first violin, was born in Daegu, Korea and moved to Toronto, Canada when she was 14 years old. Her mother is a pianist and held a teaching studio at home, so Joelle learned solfège through her mom, who was also her accompanist.



Joelle loves good stories, whether in books, movies, or theater. During the pandemic Joelle discovered painting, which has become another of her passions. Joelle and her husband, Sean Maree, a bassoonist with the United States Coast Guard Band, love anything outdoors, including parks, beaches, and trails with their baby, Clare.

Yukiko Kuhara, second violin, was born in Nagasaki, Japan and while no one in her immediate family is a musician, she has learned that her grandfather was a gifted singer. Yukiko's husband, Jacob, is a pianist, and in addition to playing music together and spending time with their dog, Max, Yukiko loves baking and bakery/café hopping. Her other hobby is Kintsugi, a traditional



Japanese method of repairing broken pottery with gold. We cannot wait to see some of her artwork!

Selah Kwak, second violin, feels that she's come home to the Hartford Symphony. She grew up in a non-musical family, but with parents who were classical music lovers, and attended Hall High School. When Selah's best friend



in elementary school, Mia, brought her mom (Sharon Dennison, former Principal Violist of the HSO) to class to perform, Selah told her parents that she HAD to learn violin. Having grown up listening to the Hartford Symphony, the opportunity to join the orchestra was a dream come true. When not playing or teaching music, Selah walks dogs, and enjoys hiking and traveling.

Nathan Lowman, second violin & our new music librarian, was born in Wilmington, Delaware to a family that valued the arts. Growing up,



Nathan took piano lessons with his grandmother and Nathan's uncle is Assistant Principal Trumpet and a longtime member of the Chicago Symphony. Outside of playing violin, Nathan hangs out with his girlfriend

Kristen. They've been together for almost nine years and are now the proud parents of a new Breville air fryer/convection oven (which they have, quite appropriately, named Timothy).

Our new violist:



Devon Duarte, viola, is from Dartmouth, MA, and is part of a "relatively" non-musical family, but he does acknowledge that a few distant relatives were involved in some local bands! Other than his deep love of music, Devon is a proud coffee nerd, and has worked as a barista at various specialty coffee shops throughout New England for the past six years.

Our new cellist:



Adam Willson, cello, is originally from Hastings on Hudson, New York. Aside from music, Adam is an avid hiker, runner and chef. His passion for music extends to his love for nature, and his greatest joy is melding these two interests into one.

Our new double bassist:



Alexander Svensen, double bass, was raised backstage in several local theaters in his hometown of Jamestown, New York, where his parents were both onstage and in the pit band. Alexander came to Connecticut for graduate school and stayed for the classical music scene that offers multiple performance opportunities. He can be found on hiking trails and mountaintops across NY and New England when he's not in the concert hall. Alexander also performs with the Norwalk Symphony (principal bass), Springfield Symphony (assistant principal bass) and the Vermont Symphony to name just a few!

Meet our new principal oboe!



Erik Andrusyak, principal oboe, was appointed to the HSO in May of 2024. Born in Russia, Erik moved to the United States at the age of 2, and while his dad is an amateur piano and bassoon player who loves music, Erik is the only one in his

family to pursue music as a career. He is also the co-principal oboe of the United States Coast Guard Band, and principal oboe of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra. He and his wife, Jamie, one of our new violinists highlighted above, were married in 2019 and moved to CT in the fall of 2021. Beyond performing music, he loves films, playing board games, and exploring the world of international wines. He and Jamie have two cats, and his phone is filled with too many photos of them being way too cute.



We are delighted to have brought on so many new musicians last season, and our current season will welcome a new percussionist, a new principal trumpet, a new third trumpet and a new pianist, just to name a few! Stay tuned for updates, as we will be sure to introduce them to all of you in future editions of Quarter Notes!



WANT TO REALLY GET CLOSER TO THE MUSIC? IT'S EASY - HOST A MUSICIAN!

Have you heard about the HSO Musician Host program? It's vitally important – and here's why. The life of a musician involves far more than the challenging routine of daily practice and performance. It also involves traveling. *Lots of traveling.*

Today, most orchestral musicians throughout the country have multiple jobs, which means that they perform with multiple ensembles in multiple cities. Part of their life necessarily includes many hours of work-related travel by car, train or plane. And that kind of demanding travel can be exhausting and even dangerous, as musicians race to get to the rehearsal hall on time, often traveling considerable distances. They need a home base, a home-away-from-home, and the ability to practice when needed. Eight years ago, the HSO found the answer: the Musician Host Program, a unique program that helps musicians feel welcomed and protected when they perform with the Hartford Symphony.

For musicians, safe housing means not traveling long distances to get home late at night. It means arriving rested and ready for rehearsals. And the best part? New and lasting friendships have been formed.

The Musician Host Program has created bonds that will last a lifetime. Not only are the musicians smiling, but there are

smiles on the faces of our audience members who are proud to call themselves hosts.

And now, we need YOU.

As the HSO welcomes the 11 new musicians who joined our ranks in the 23/24 season, whose profiles are outlined in this newsletter, the upcoming 24/25 season will add even more musicians to fill posts through the audition process: principal trumpet, third trumpet, piano, percussion, principal cello, bass trombone and violin section, just to name a few. As new musicians join the symphony, the demand for hosts increases. This is YOUR chance to make the best friend you have not yet met: a musician of the Hartford Symphony.



The grandchildren of Karen Will– Owen (8) and Luca (5) with HSO trombonist, Michael Shayte.


The experiences of participating hosts have encouraged others to join. Karen and Phil Will, host to trombonist Mike Shayte, were delighted when their grandchildren, Owen (8) and Luca (5) learned about the trombone from Mike who stayed with them in February of 2024. Owen, now a 4th grader at the

Noah Webster School, announced his plans to begin trombone lessons, because “he is now tall enough and his arms are long enough, and he can hear the notes as the slide moves!”

Timothy and Barb Mitchell, ongoing hosts to a varied number of HSO musicians, summarized their experience as follows:

“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, in performance. It’s been an experience not to be missed.”

Curious to know if you could be a host?

Most important is the desire to make new friends and become true friends with the musicians. 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. Being a host does NOT mean that you commit to a schedule, because we respect the varied schedules and personal needs of our hosts. Are you a winter snowbird? Not a problem – we’ll put hosting on hold and circle back when you are ready. Concerned that hosting might interfere with family or vacation plans? Conflicts will never happen: you host ONLY when it is convenient for YOU. 

Have we piqued your interest?

Feel free to reach out to Ruth Sovronsky, former Director of Development and current Development Consultant, and she’ll be happy to explain how it works.

Her cell phone is 516-448-6549 or she can be reached at rsovrnsky@hartfordsymphony.org

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De-Composed: An exploration of the musicians and composers we should know better.

Roland Hayes, born to a formerly-enslaved mother, was the first Black artist to appear as a soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. By the late 1920s, Hayes was the highest paid tenor in the world, and the first African American man to win international fame as a concert performer. We should all know his name and his remarkable achievements.

Tenor and composer Roland Hayes was born in a plantation cabin on June 3, 1887, in Curryville, Georgia. His mother, Fanny Hayes, whom he lovingly called "Angel Mo," was formerly enslaved and his father, William, worked the land as a tenant farmer to raise their family of seven children. Tragically, William died of a work-related injury in 1898, which prompted Fanny to move her family to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Forced to leave school in the fifth grade to help support the family, 11-year-old Hayes worked in an iron foundry until he was sixteen. Hayes was badly injured when a conveyor belt pulled him into the machinery, and perhaps it was that accident that turned him away from factory work and towards music. Born with a beautiful voice, Hayes sang in the choir at the church the family faithfully attended and began to explore music. Outside of church, Hayes sang for pennies and formed a singing group known as the Silver-Toned Quartet.

His singing impressed a local choral director, W. Arthur Calhoun, an Oberlin-educated musician, who offered him free music lessons. Calhoun introduced Hayes to the great opera singers of the time, such as Enrico Caruso and Nellie



Roland Hayes

Melba. Hayes, recalling the moment, explained how music had changed his life and opened the door to a career:

"In the foundry, I happened upon a new method for making iron sash-weights, and that got me a little raise in pay and a little free time. I had

not heard any real music but one day, a pianist came to our Church in Chattanooga and as a choir member, I was asked to sing a solo with him. The pianist liked my voice, and he took me in hand and introduced me to phonograph records by Caruso. That opened the heavens for me. The beauty of what could be done with the voice just overwhelmed me."

Hayes' mother, however, did not have the means to spend money on private vocal lessons for her son and believed that his best chance for a 'good life' was to become a minister. Despite his mother's ideas about his future, Hayes was determined to broaden his education. Using whatever extra funds he could save, Hayes paid for vocal coaching and tutors in academic studies to make up for lost years in his education. In 1906, with

his savings of \$50.00, Hayes moved to Nashville, Tennessee and enrolled as a preparatory student at Fisk University. Working as a house servant to support himself, Hayes ultimately became a full-time student at Fisk and a member of the famed Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Upon leaving Fisk, Hayes moved to Louisville, Kentucky and found work performing in a silent movie theater, but the job required that he sing offstage to conceal his racial



Hayes (R) with HT Burleigh (L) and Jennie Robinson, instructor at Fisk University.

identity. In 1911, Hayes accepted an invitation to rejoin the Fisk Jubilee Singers as lead tenor on a tour of Boston. After the tour ended, Hayes stayed in Boston, and focused on trying to forge a career for himself on the concert stage. He worked as a hotel bellboy, a waiter, and messenger for an insurance company to pay for vocal studies with a new teacher, Arthur Hubbard, an operatic bass. Hayes also continued his academic studies at Harvard's extension school. Notwithstanding his talent, no producer was willing to sponsor a Black performer.

Hayes recalled an encounter with William Brennan, then the manager of the Boston Symphony, and reflected on the near-impossible task to find support or management as a Black artist in classical music:

"I think it was in 1920 that I met William Brennan. I told him about my hopes, and he told me that no one of my race would ever be accepted in music. I thanked him. I wasn't angry at what he said but I knew that I still hadn't done enough."

Undeterred, Hayes saved up enough money to rent Boston's Symphony Hall and in 1915, gave his first recital to an audience enthralled by his masterful performance of arias by Schubert, Tchaikovsky and Mozart, and a beautiful selection of Negro spirituals. In early 1918 Hayes, began a U.S. tour with two other musicians, William Lawrence and William Richardson, calling themselves the Hayes Trio.

Acting as his own promoter and manager, in April of 1920 Hayes set sail for a planned tour of England, accompanied by his pianist Lawrence Brown, who had been



Hayes with Sir George Henschel, first BSO conductor.

his accompanist since 1918. His critically-successful recitals drew the attention of the press. The publicity around the performances resulted in an invitation for Hayes and Brown to give a command performance before King George V and Queen Mary. While in London, Hayes studied with composer/conductor Sir George Henschel. He found managers who helped him with bookings and was warmly received at his engagements

in cities throughout Europe. He silenced and then stunned an initially hostile Berlin audience with his performance of Schubert's *Du Bist Die Ruh*. A recording of Hayes singing that piece may be enjoyed here: [Roland Hayes, Schubert, "Du Bist Die Ruh" - YouTube](#)

Upon his return to the United States in 1922, the internationally-acclaimed Hayes performed at Boston's



Lawrence Brown (L) and Roland Hayes (R)

Symphony Hall to rave reviews. Shortly thereafter, he performed at New York's Carnegie Hall, the first Black artist to appear on that stage. In 1923, the very same William Brennan, who had discouraged Hayes three years earlier, became Hayes' manager and organized his performance tour throughout the United States.

By 1924, Hayes was performing more than 80 concerts a year, many with major orchestras in Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Detroit. He was the first Black artist to appear with the Boston Symphony. Southern venues refused to engage him, but in 1924, he performed at least one concert before a desegregated audience in Atlanta. It is estimated that his income in 1924 was approximately \$100,000 (the equivalent of roughly \$1,773,100 today), at a time when the per capita income in the United States averaged \$740.00.

In 1925 Hayes gave a command performance for Queen Mother Maria Christina of Spain. That same year, he was awarded the Spingarn Medal, given annually by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for the "most outstanding achievement among colored people." Hayes toured Italy in 1927 and the Soviet Union the following year. He was hailed wherever he went as one of the greatest lieder (art song) singers of his era for his silken smooth tone and sensitive interpretations. Although Hayes often performed concert renditions of arias, he never appeared in an opera for the simple reason that interracial casting was not permitted, regardless of the venue.

In 1931, Hayes performed at Constitution Hall in Washington,



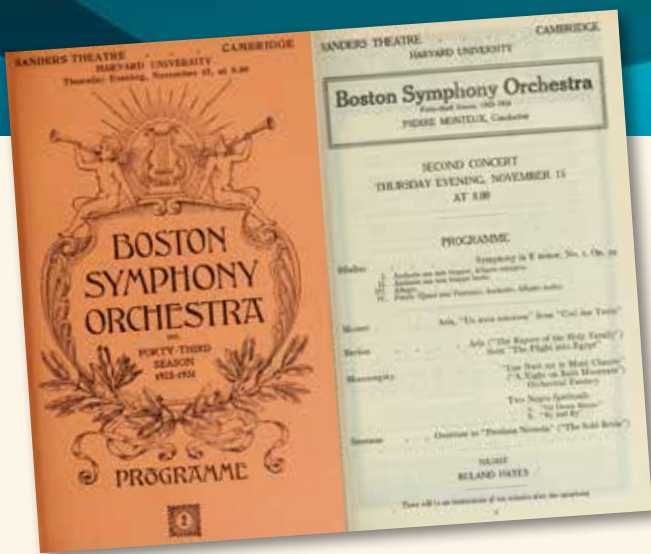
The Hayes family.

DC, which had been dedicated two years earlier. Just prior to the recital, Hayes reportedly demanded that the audience be desegregated. The incident led the Hall's management to institute a "white artists only" policy and eight years later, in 1939, that policy resulted in the Hall's refusal to permit the appearance by a Black singer, Marian Anderson. The public outcry and intervention of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt moved Marian Anderson to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and resulted in a history-making performance before an audience of thousands.

Hayes' concerts always included spirituals, which Hayes called Aframerican religious folk music. As many of the songs had never been transcribed in written form, Hayes arranged them for orchestral accompaniment. In a 1947 *Christian Science Monitor* interview, Hayes spoke about the universality of his work.

"When I began my career, I realized that if I would speak to all men, I must learn the language and the ways of thought of all men. What good could I do if I knew only my own ways and the thoughts of my own people? So, I learned to sing the songs of all people.... The song I sing is nothing. But what I give through the song is everything. I cannot put into words what I try to do with this instrument that is nearest to me--my voice."

Hayes married his cousin, Helen Alzada Mann, in September of 1932 and they had one daughter, Afrika Franzada. They maintained a residence in Brookline (a Boston suburb) and in 1938, they bought the 600-acre farm in Curryville, Georgia where Hayes' mother had worked as a slave. It became their second residence. In July of 1942, when Hayes' wife and daughter were harassed for sitting in a whites-only area of a shoe store in Georgia, Hayes confronted the store clerk. He and his



1950. After the 1940s, Hayes performed sparingly, but did embark on a successful tour of Europe in 1954. His autobiography, *Angel Mo' and Her Son, Roland Hayes*, was

wife were arrested, and Hayes was beaten. A week later, in response to the assault, Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge warned Black people who wanted to encourage desegregation to "stay out of Georgia" saying, "We are going to keep the Jim Crow laws and protect them." Hayes and his family left Georgia shortly thereafter and sold the farm in 1948. However, many of Hayes' family members still live in Georgia.

In addition to an extraordinarily long performance career, Hayes taught voice at the College of Fine Arts at Boston University starting in

published in 1942 and his collection of spirituals, *My Favorite Spirituals: 30 Songs for Voice and Piano*, was published in 1948. Hayes retired in 1973 and died of pneumonia at Boston General Hospital on January 1, 1977, at the age of 89. He is buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Dorchester, Massachusetts.

In 1991, the Georgia Music Hall of Fame inducted Hayes posthumously. In 1995, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources erected an official historic marker in Hayes' honor in Calhoun, adjacent to the Calhoun Civic Auditorium where Hayes had once performed. In 2000, the Roland Hayes Museum opened in the Harris Arts Center in Calhoun, where concerts are held annually in his honor.

Throughout his long career, Hayes actively supported the Black singers who followed him, including Paul Robeson, Leontyne Price, George Shirley and William Warfield, to name a few. In a television documentary called "The Musical Legacy of Roland Hayes," William Warfield recalled a conversation with Hayes, who told him, "I started all this. Now, you can't stop where I stopped. You've got to go on."

You can enjoy the documentary about Hayes' life on public television at this link: [WPT Archives: 1990s | The Musical Legacy of Roland Hayes | PBS](#)

Source Material:

[Roland Hayes Biography – Afrocentric Voices in "Classical" Music \(afrovoices.com\)](#)

[Roland Hayes - New Georgia Encyclopedia](#)

[The Artistry of Aframerican Roland Hayes | San Francisco Classical Voice \(sfcv.org\)](#)

[Roland Hayes \(1887-1976\) • \(blackpast.org\)](#)

[BSO | A Century of Song: Roland Hayes and the Boston Symphony...](#)

[Roland Hayes Biography \(musicianguide.com\)](#)



Fisk Jubilee Singers, 1911, Hayes in back row, far right.

Money CAN buy happiness.

Contrary to the old adage, Henry Zachs knows that money can buy happiness. How? By giving it away.

A known local philanthropist, Henry creates joy each time he gives away money. He began Endow Hartford 21 with an initial \$1 million dollar gift in matching funds and created a unique initiative that strengthens nonprofit organizations throughout our area by building endowments. Why endowment? Because Henry knows that a robust endowment helps offset the unexpected and provides a strong platform that helps plan for the future.

Be like Henry. Use your money to buy happiness – for you, your community AND the symphony you love.

Only 11 organizations were invited to join the final phase of the Endow Hartford 21 program. The HSO is so honored to be one of them.

Endow Hartford 21 is a 1:1 matching program to build HSO's endowment. We just need YOU to join in – and buy some happiness.

Timing is everything. This remarkable opportunity, which began on January 1, 2024, will end on December 31, 2024, and the chance to add at least \$120,000 to HSO's endowment will end.

Here's how it works:

- Your gift to Endow Hartford 21 can be matched **IF** it is in addition to your usual Annual Fund support for the HSO in whatever amount is customary for you. Why? Because



An Endowment Match Program for the Greater Hartford Community

our benefactor, Henry, wisely recognized the importance of **continuing annual support**, while simultaneously building an endowment. Healthy organizations need BOTH.

- If you've already made your Annual Fund gift, or if you are making regularly recurring gifts to the organization, or you plan to make your annual gift simultaneously with your Endow Hartford 21 support, you are eligible to participate.

- Gifts to the HSO through Endow Hartford 21 between \$250 and \$10,000 per donor/household are eligible for the match. The wonderful 1:1 matching opportunity immediately transforms your gift of \$500 to \$1,000, and your gift of \$1,000 to \$2,000!


- Did you already make a gift to the HSO in Phase 1? No problem! Under the terms of the match, you can donate again – and if you gave \$10,000 in the first phase, you are permitted to do so again in this new phase.

- Make your gift via the Endow Hartford21 website, at <https://www.endowhartford21.com/organizations/>

- Click "Make a Gift Online" or "Send Check to: HFPG" just below the HSO logo to give online or to obtain instructions on how to make your gift with a check or appreciated stock.

A huge thank you to all who will jump on board – for the first time or the second – to help the HSO reach our goal by December 31, 2024.

Give the only gift that keeps giving – and is guaranteed to put a smile on your face.

And happiness is contagious! Our musicians will be smiling too. 

QUESTIONS? Contact Eric Hutchinson, HSO's Development Director, at ehutchinson@hartfordsymphony.org, or by calling him at 860-760-7321.

SOUND BITES: A SLICE OF HSO HISTORY

GIVING CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE: DONORS MAKE WORLD PREMIERES POSSIBLE

In February of 2024, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra presented the world premiere of *Anahata*, a three-movement concerto for guitar and cello by Brazilian American composer, Clarice Assad. The work was commissioned by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and was created especially for guitarist Rupert Boyd and cellist Laura Metcalf, a duo known as *Boyd Meets Girl*.

This commission would not have been possible without the generous donors who stepped forward to help make the commission possible, namely, the Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Saunders Fund for Innovative Programming, Nancy Grover, Steve Metcalf and Nancy Pappas, as well as Robert and Linda Zemel. All of us are indebted to the generosity of these donors, without whom the program would not have been possible.

The Hartford Symphony Orchestra has done much to seek out and promote new works by gifted composers. The work presented in February of 2024 was not the first time that the Hartford Symphony Orchestra performed a work it had commissioned. But presenting a world premiere is not an easy undertaking and requires the support

of donors who provide the funding necessary to award a commission to a composer. Knowing of HSO's history, we took a stroll through the archives and found the following list of world premieres presented by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, with credit to the organizations, foundations and donors who made it possible:

- On November 16, 1954, the Symphony performed *Folksong Fantasy for piano and orchestra*, by Roy Harris, commissioned for the Hartford Symphony Orchestra by the Musical Club of Hartford. A subsequent recording of the piece may be heard here: [Roy Harris: Fantasy for piano and orchestra \(1954\) - YouTube](#)

- On May 4, 1976, we performed *Anacrusis* by Edward Miller, a former professor at the Hartt School of Music, which was commissioned by the Symphonic Society of Greater Hartford, on the occasion of America's bicentennial. A later recording of the piece may be heard



Roy Harris

here: [Edward J Miller → Anacrusis \(youtube.com\)](#)

- On April 25, 1979, the HSO performed *Montage*, by Donald Wheelock. Under the direction of Maestro Arthur Winograd, the HSO had sponsored a competition open to composers of all ages in the New England area. The winner, Wheelock, was a member of the music department of Smith College in Northampton, MA, and the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1974.

- On January 6, 1981, the HSO performed *Prelude to a Concert in*



John Harbison

Connecticut by composer Donald Harris, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, aided by a grant from the Connecticut Commission of the Arts.

• On March 11, 1986, the HSO performed *Ulysses' Raft Suite No. 2* by Pulitzer-prize winning composer John Harbison, which was commissioned by the Hartford Symphony.

• On April 27, 1990, *The Castle of Arianrhod*, by composer David Wooldridge, was performed under the direction of Maestro Michael Lankester. The work was commissioned by the Hartford Symphony with support from the Connecticut Commission for the Arts.



Stephen Michael Gryc

"The songs are luminous works, with a tangy but accessible harmonic language, graced with a humanizing sense of melodic line and a mildly exotic rhythmic lilt. They are the work of a major talent, and they should be recorded immediately."

The review was indeed prescient. Today, nearly twenty years later, Ms. Coleman is indeed recognized as "a major talent" as well as a Grammy-nominated artist, whose works have been performed by many major American symphonies.

• In the 2005/2006 season, in November 2005, the HSO presented *Wandering the Moon Nursery*, by Polish-born composer Michael Gatonska, a resident of East Hartford. The work was commissioned by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra with generous support from The Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation, now known as The Roberts Foundation For The Arts.



Valerie Coleman

• On January 16, 2005, the HSO commissioned a new work by Valerie Coleman, a set of two songs for orchestra and soprano entitled *The Painted Lady*. The piece used the words of African American poet Margaret Danner and was Ms. Coleman's very first commission. The concert was favorably reviewed by *The Hartford Courant*:

- In March 2007, we performed *Passaggi*, a concerto for trombone by composer Stephen Michael Gryc, commissioned by Joseph Alessi, principal trombone at the New York Philharmonic. Mr. Gryc's professorship at the University of Hartford made for a perfect collaboration with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra for this world premiere, and in an article in the *New York Times*, Mr. Gryc observed,

"Definitely the selling point of this piece was Joe. It's like the secret weapon of a composer. If he can have a great musician be an advocate for a piece, there's nothing better." <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/15/arts/music/15waki.html>

- In May 2011, the HSO performed yet another world premiere by composer Stephen Michael Gryc, *Harmonia Mundi*, a violin concerto specifically written for HSO Concertmaster Leonid Sigal, commissioned by the Hartford Symphony. <https://hartfordsymphony.org/musicians/leonid-sigal/>

- A competition sponsored by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra was won by Christopher LaRosa, whose composition, the *Fanfare for the Hartford Woman*, was performed in May 2015. A group of TEN individual women donors combined to support the creation of that new work.

- In June 2023, the HSO presented not one but TWO world premieres on the closing concert of the




Quinn Mason

season. These included *Stonewall Suite* by Iain Bell, and *She Dreams of Flying* by Quinn Mason, HSO's 2022/2023 Joyce C. Willis Artist In Residence, which residency was funded by a generous grant from The Roberts Foundation For The Arts.

We give credit to and thanks to ALL the extraordinary donors and supporters who have made new works possible, and have helped the Hartford Symphony Orchestra be vibrant, relevant and supportive of new works. Are you interested in learning what it takes to commission a new work? Or perhaps you are one of our like-minded donors who want to take part in a future endeavor? To learn more or ask questions, please



Iain Bell

reach out to Eric Hutchinson, HSO's Director of Development at 860-760-7321, or write to him at ehutchinson@hartfordsymphony.org. He would LOVE to hear from you! 



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