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Violinist Mariel Bailey explains some of the fine points of orchestral music to elementary school students. Musicians' visits to classes help students understand and enjoy what they will experience at a subsequent concert at Benaroya Hall.

Committed to the community

Musicians contribute to education and outreach programs

For some musicians, the high notes in the Seattle Symphony's education and outreach programs come from the children. Grade-schoolers who ask questions like, "Why do you put your hand in your horn?" "Why is a horn in a brass group and also a woodwind group?" "Why do you have to share a music stand instead of having one of your own?"

Trombonist Steve Fissel is fascinated by the teenaged music students he coaches. "They're all different, with differing levels of commitment, and you have to reach them in different ways. Music can help them learn about themselves, and get them to open up."

Horn player Mark Robbins enjoys watching the audiences at some of the neighborhood concerts: individuals of all ages and entire families, including many people who don't often get to see a "live" performance of classical music.

Thanks to willing orchestra members and committed staff, the Seattle Symphony has a thriving outreach program that engages the musicians as well as kids and adults throughout the Seattle area. The energy occasionally is conveyed to the rest of the state, when the symphony is able to tour areas beyond Puget Sound.

Something for everyone

The symphony sponsors an entire spectrum of educational programs. While many of the offerings are in Benaroya Hall (including the Soundbridge Music Discovery Center), others take musicians into schools, community centers and other venues. Last year, when the symphony visited Eastern Washington, several orchestra members conducted master classes for music students at Washington State University.

The outreach efforts have been enhanced in recent years by grant funding for activities such as the Arts in Education program that brings secondary school students to Benaroya Hall for three

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Unless otherwise noted, all photos in this issue are the work of clarinetist Larey McDaniel.

PHOTOS AT TOP: ROBIN BARTHOLICK (LEFT AND RIGHT-CENTER), DAN LAMONT (LEFT-CENTER AND RIGHT)

Glimpses of the Seattle Opera season

It's a remarkable season for Seattle Opera, from the orchestra members' perspective. Beginning with the August staging of the complete *Ring* cycle and concluding with the seldom-heard *Macbeth* that will take the stage in May, things are lively in the pit.

Violist Dorothy Shapiro is one of the many musicians who were delighted to play the *Ring* last August. She says she always finds it fun and energizing. "I like to get the music and start practicing a couple months ahead, even though I've played it many times. Some of the passages are so complex that I have to go over them again and again to get them back into my fingers.

"The *Ring* is the most taxing work—physically and technically—that the opera orchestra does. It's an endurance contest: an exhausting one, both because the operas are so long and because the music is so demanding."

Dorothy worked in Germany in the 1980s, and remembers discovering that some German opera orchestras substitute new players in their

string and horn sections halfway through the *Ring* operas, to reduce the demand on the musicians. "The people in my German orchestra couldn't believe that the string players in Seattle played an entire *Ring* opera without relief!"

An opportunity to play a rare instrument

Trombonist David Ritt also loves the *Ring* cycle, in part because for those operas he plays a bass trumpet—a rarely heard instrument specified by Wagner in his scores.

"It's really a trumpet for a trombone player because of the range of the instrument and the size of its mouthpiece," David says, by way of explaining why he—rather than one of the trumpet players—is assigned to it. "It has the 'busiest' brass part in the *Ring* next to the first horn. And it's actually my favorite of the brass parts. It has everything from screaming highs to ultra-lows, and some very exposed passages."

David's bass trumpet expertise won him a

Warm reunions for retirees and players



The symphony is creating events and opportunities for its "alumni"—retired musicians—including social events that bring longtime friends together. The program is guided by retirees Norma Durst (viola) and Karen Bonnevie (violin), along with bass player Nancy Griffin and Jennifer Adair of the symphony staff. The alums are also being invited to attend

open rehearsals and to volunteer for symphony events as a means of continuing their relationships with the symphony and its musicians. In the left photo are Karen Bonnevie and violinist Virginia Hunt Luce. At upper right is violist Rachel Swerdlow with retired cellist Ruth Grainger. Retirees Elna Haynes (horn) and Bruce Lawrence (bass) are at center. ●

frantic call from the Metropolitan Opera in 1989, when its orchestra needed a substitute player on an emergency basis. He immediately flew to New York and began playing for performances after only one rehearsal—and has returned three times since to play the same instrument for the Met's productions of the *Ring* operas.

While David estimates he has played the *Ring* nearly 80 times (counting rehearsals as well as performances), he says he never finds it boring. "It's through-composed, so there are no repeated 'chunks' of music. And it has a huge variety of texture. It's 18 hours of music that I know better than most other music."

The Wagnerian impact

Violinist Virginia Hunt Luce says she feels lucky to have spent much of her career in Seattle, at the right time to be a part of Seattle Opera's increasing expertise and renown for the *Ring*. "During the first few years that we were develop-

ing the focus on Wagner, we would do one of the four operas of the *Ring* cycle each year. The first time we did the entire cycle in one week, in the summer of 1976, people thought it was an audacious undertaking. At that time, there was no other place in America that you could hear the entire *Ring* in one week.

"Over the years, we've done memorable productions of all the major Wagner operas—not just the *Ring*. It's put us on the opera map internationally; we are often known as 'America's Wagner Orchestra', and we have recorded many CDs devoted to Wagner's orchestral music."

Those who missed the 2005 production of the *Ring* cycle will have another chance to experience it in Seattle in 2009. ●



Violist Dorothy Shapiro

Remembering three vital individuals

Seattle Symphony musicians have been saddened in recent months by the deaths of three people who were important to the orchestra.

Milton Katims, who served as the symphony's music director from 1954 until 1976, was one of the best-known figures in Seattle arts circles. Many credit him with raising the community's consciousness about the orchestra's potential, and convincing people to invest in the symphony's future. "His picture was even on the cover of the Seattle phone book one year," Principal Cellist Ray Davis remembers. "People who knew nothing else about classical music knew about Milton Katims."

Maestro Katims used his connections from his years of living and performing on the East Coast to bring big-name guest artists to Seattle, including securing Van Cliburn (who was tremendously popular because he had won the Tchaikovsky Piano Competition) as a headliner for the opening concert of the 1962 World's Fair.

Hermann Michael, the German-born conductor who often led the orchestra for Seattle Opera productions, died late in 2005. He first came to Seattle (his Western Hemisphere debut) to conduct *Tannhäuser* in the mid-1980s, and returned many times. Maestro Michael was best known here for conducting three complete *Ring* cycles, the last one in 1995.

He was a favorite among members of the opera orchestras, according to recently retired oboist Glen Danielson, because he was both gracious and determined: "He knew what he wanted to achieve with the orchestra, and he enabled us to produce it."

Maestro Michael was also an occasional guest conductor for the Seattle Symphony, but it was the Wagnerian operas for which orchestra members remember him best.

The orchestra also lost one of its own with the death in January of former principal bass player **Jim Harnett**, who was with the symphony from 1957 until ill health forced his retirement in 1992. Fellow bassist Ron Simon remembers Jim as a "fabulous" musician who had studied with Georges Moleux, renowned principal bass of the Boston Symphony, and had played with the Boston Pops.

Jim was also a member of the Cleveland Orchestra and the Indianapolis and North Carolina symphonies before his arrival in Seattle. He played principal bass for the Chautauqua Festival Orchestra in upstate New York for many years. ●

World-class young musicians with divergent backgrounds



Ko-Ichiro Yamamoto,
principal trombone

They came from three continents to fill vacancies in the orchestra. Five new musicians joined the symphony players at the beginning of the season, and three more have won auditions and will take seats in the orchestra before summer.

Principal Trombone Ko-Ichiro Yamamoto had studied on three continents before he applied to the Seattle Symphony. The Tokyo native is the product of parents who are professional musicians, although Ko (as he prefers to be called) says he was mostly interested in soccer as a child. His parents preferred it that way: they discouraged their son from considering a career as a musician because they considered it an unfortunate way to make a living, thanks to poor working conditions and rampant nepotism among Japanese orchestras.

Ko took piano lessons as a child, but hated them—and confesses to having skipped them occasionally to play in the park instead. He did love 1960s pop music from the U.S. and England, especially the Beatles and the Monkees. But he also loved the *New World Symphony*, snippets of which were often used for Japanese television commercials. He decided he wanted to learn to play it, and began

experimenting with his father's trombones.

By the time Ko graduated from a music high school, his sister was studying piano in Budapest. Ko went to visit her and decided to stay in order to attend the Franz Liszt Academy of Music.

When the New York Philharmonic performed in Budapest in 1993, Ko's teachers arranged for him to meet Principal Trombone Joseph Alessi, who also teaches at Juilliard. The following summer Ko went to New York for a brief visit and took several lessons from Alessi. "It changed my playing a lot, and I wanted to study with him no matter what it took." He was accepted at Juilliard.

Ko found Alessi to be a tough taskmaster. "After two years he told me it was time to start taking every available audition." Ko's fourth try won him the job of second trombone with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. "In four days I went from being a student to being a professional with the world's busiest opera orchestra. I hadn't played any opera before, except for one student production, so I had to learn all the repertoire—including the *Ring* cycle in the first year."

During his eight seasons at the Met, Ko often went home to Japan in the summers. Since 1999 he has been participating in the annual Saito-Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, with Seiji Ozawa conducting.

In 2004, he took a leave of absence from the Met orchestra to play with the NHK Orchestra in Tokyo. "But my dream was become the principal trombonist for one of the major American symphony orchestras," so he was delighted when an opening occurred in Seattle. He describes his new Symphony position as "a perfect fit for me."

Ko plans to continue to play at the Saito-Kinen Festival and other select engagements in Japan. "It's still my

country," he says, "and it gives me a chance to see my family."

He also has a young family in Seattle: a wife and a three-year-old son who loves Seattle because there are many places to watch trains.

Ayako Gamo

Violinist Ayako Gamo is also a native of Japan: one who chose her instrument at a very early age. She remembers watching orchestra broadcasts on television and thinking the violins sounded lovely, and starting violin lessons on a 1/8-size instrument at the age of four.

Ayako's family lived on Hokkaido, and the closest branch of the Toho Pre-college for musicians was in Sapporo, on the opposite side of the large island. So, for three years, she and her mother flew to Sapporo every Saturday so Ayako could take violin lessons and music theory classes, and then they took the night train back to Hokkaido.

The family moved to Tokyo when Ayako was 11 so she could attend the Toho school—the most famous music school in Japan for high school and college students. "By that time I knew music was very important—not only to me, but to my whole family."

Like Ko, Ayako learned at an early age about the drawbacks to being a



Ayako Gamo, first violin

backgrounds converge on the symphony

professional musician in Japan. “There are few orchestras and therefore few job openings. Hiring is through connections rather than auditions—and I had no connections.”

She transferred to the New England Conservatory in Boston for her junior year of college, and then earned a master’s degree at Juilliard. “Juilliard is a big name in Japan, and I thought a degree from there would stand me in good stead if I had to return to Japan and get a teaching job. But I had wanted very much to play in an orchestra ever since I was young, so I auditioned for the Oregon Symphony and won a job there.”

While she loved the Northwest, Ayako wanted to move upward and onward in the ladder of orchestras. During her stint in Portland, she says she practiced every possible moment—some of it to prepare for auditions. She took six auditions around the country in two years, and was offered the Seattle job last June.

Ayako is finding much to do in Seattle in addition to playing music. She is about to begin volunteering in a Japanese community services program, probably to work in a Japanese nursing home or a support program for the elderly. “My parents passed away while I was still pursuing my studies, and I regret that I was too young to be of much help to them. Perhaps now I can be of assistance to some of the elderly Japanese people here.”

She also writes a monthly article—about the Seattle Symphony and being a professional musician—for a Japanese-language Website that is focused on Japanese people living in Seattle.

Tim Garland

Tim Garland, also a new member of the first violin section, is a native of England and the son of two violinists. His father is a former member of the orchestra of the Academy of St. Martin



Tim Garland, first violin

in the Fields; Tim’s mother was his first violin teacher.

He attended the Purcell School of Music in London from the age of 11 and came to the U.S. to study at the Indiana University School of Music, “in part because my parents wanted me to have a broader approach.” He was amazed at what he found at Indiana (IU). “The teaching, the facilities and the music-making were incredible—way beyond what I expected my university experience to be. The curriculum requirements were much broader than they would have been in an English music conservatory program. I really enjoyed having both the sharp focus of my musical studies and the vast wealth of other classes available to me.”

Tim earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees—and the coveted IU Performer’s Certificate for outstanding performance—under the tutelage of his violin professor, Yuval Yaron. He also won the school concerto competition, playing the Sibelius Violin Concerto, and performed the Beethoven Triple Concerto at the opening concert for IU’s Auer Hall, collaborating with cellist Mark Kosower (who will perform with the Seattle Symphony in January 2007).

Tim has won prizes at the Washington, D.C., International Competition and the Midland Odessa National Young Artist competition, and was a soloist at the Houston Symphony’s 90th Anniversary concert.

While on vacation during his five years as a first violinist with the Houston Symphony, Tim visited Seattle with his wife Diane. “We really liked this area and decided we wanted to live here, so we started regularly checking the Seattle Symphony website for audition announcements.”

Tim and Diane moved to Seattle in late August. “Everyone noticed our Texas license plates and asked whether we were hurricane evacuees.”

Ben Hausmann

Oboist Ben Hausmann grew up in the United States, but it was music from elsewhere that drew him to listen. When he was three, his mother bought a recording of music from Carl Sagan’s “Cosmos” series, which contained compositions created all over the world. “My favorite was a piece by Bach for unaccompanied violin. I thought it was perfect.

“I had been playing the piano since I was about five but, when I first heard the oboe, I was so drawn to the sound I wanted to play it. When my



Ben Hausmann, oboe

The Seattle convergence

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hands grew large enough, I started studying with the oboe teacher at Bowling Green State University in my hometown.”

Ben attended Michigan State University, where Dan Stolper was his teacher. He declared a major in piano as well as oboe, which has proven wise: “I also write music, so keyboard skills are helpful. I started dabbling in composition as soon as I started playing the piano, but didn’t really make a concerted effort as a composer until I was about 16.”

Ben earned a master’s degree at Juilliard, studying with Elaine Douvais. He met Seattle Principal Oboist Nathan Hughes while both were students there, and then moved into Nathan’s seat in the Savannah Symphony as Nathan moved to the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. “The Savannah orchestra died, and I was literally in the moving van when the Florida Philharmonic called to invite me to be their principal oboist. And THAT orchestra died after six weeks! It was a fantastic orchestra, and I was amazed that the Ft. Lauderdale/Miami communities, with all their wealth, would allow their symphony to collapse.”

Richard Woodhams, principal oboist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, was Ben’s other primary influence. “I studied with him for four summers at Aspen, and learned a great deal. He helped me prepare to play the Richard Strauss oboe concerto at the Aspen festival, which he had performed there 28 years earlier.”

Like other young musicians on their way up, Ben had to devote a good deal of time and energy to auditions. He took four of them in one two-week period, and ended up accepting a job with the l’Orchestre Symphonique de Quebec. “I loved both the orchestra and the city,” he says of his year there. “And I was confident the orchestra would NOT die, because it was government-supported.”

In 2004 he also won an audition for principal oboe with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, a subsidiary of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. “Basically, it’s the Boston Pops of the West Coast. They put on sophisticated shows: things like fireworks and films onscreen while the orchestra is playing. The orchestra has a summer-only season, so I’m continuing to play in it.”

Of his first season in Seattle, Ben says: “Playing next to Nathan Hughes is simply the best. Seattle now has one of the most homogenous oboe sections in the country, because we studied with the same teacher—and at virtually the same time. I played with Nathan at the Met just once, and was inspired by it. It’s wonderful to work with him daily, and to be in the Pacific Northwest.”

Joe Kaufman

Joe Kaufman enjoyed “plunking” melodies on the family piano—and singing—as a small child. He did not, however, get off to a splendid start on the path to a career in music.

Joe showed up late for the first day of his Twin Falls, Idaho, elementary school orchestra in fifth grade. “I had thought I wanted to play the cello—like everyone else did—because it’s a cool instrument. But, by the time I got there, everything but the bass was claimed. I thought it was nasty-looking, but it was going to get me out of class for an hour because orchestra was an ‘extra’ activity.”

In high school, he was lucky enough to have a particularly skilled orchestra teacher, who Joe credits with helping him take advantage of the opportunities available to a promising young string player. Unbeknownst to Joe, his orchestra director entered his pupil in the competition for participation in the All-State, All-Northwest, and National High School Honors Orchestras. Joe won places in all three.

He also won a scholarship to the University of Utah, where he studied



Joe Kaufman, bass

with the principal bass of the Utah Symphony. “I still wasn’t very serious about a career in music, until I played ‘Sheherazade’ with the university orchestra. And somehow, from then on, that was what I wanted to do. I began practicing really hard—so hard that I developed tendonitis in my left hand and had to take two years off.”

While his hand was recovering, Joe joined a reggae band, playing keyboard. “We toured all over the country and met a lot of great people. My parents were scared I would never go back to school.”

He did return—to the University of North Texas, to study with Jeff Bradetich. A week before commencement, Joe was accepted into the New World Symphony in Miami Beach. He particularly enjoyed working with Artistic Director Michael Tilson Thomas. “It really was two more years of a very valuable education.”

Joe moved to Seattle when he won a position with the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra in 2004. He played Brahms’ Second Symphony with the Seattle Symphony as a substitute last season while he was waiting to audition.

“I had the option of auditioning for the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra the same week as my Seattle Symphony audition. I opted to stay here. I love Seattle; it’s a great place to live. And I love opera, so it’s particularly appealing to be in an orchestra that plays both symphonic and opera music.” ●

Committed to the community *continued from page 1*

concerts each school year. The underwriting is crucial: most public schools in the Seattle area have less and less funding for music programs and also for “incidentals” like bus transportation to get students to off-campus concerts and other opportunities.

While many of the symphony-arranged appearances are part of the musicians’ work as orchestra members, some also volunteer many additional hours for both symphony efforts and other music education projects in the community. Their commitment tends to be very personal. As Steve describes it, “Most of the orchestra members began studying music in public elementary schools, and advanced through solid high school band and orchestra programs. We know how hugely important these ‘beginnings’ are to the next generations of musicians and music-lovers—and that’s one major reason many of us devote time to school programs and other music education efforts. The public schools simply don’t play the same role they did when we were beginning to play instruments.”

Collaborative input

The commitment—and the players’ participation—begins at the top. The symphony’s education committee is a collaborative effort of musicians and educational program volunteers as well as members of the board of directors. Mark Robbins, clarinetist Larey McDaniel and retired violist Norma Durst represent the orchestra on the committee. The group provides input on education programming, including the musicians’ perspective.

Orchestra members’ participation in outreach efforts is as varied as the instruments they play. Music students selected for the “Gold Medalist” program come to Seattle to participate in rehearsals prior to a symphony performance in the students’ community. Some musicians mentor the medalists who play the same instrument, to help ensure they are comfortable and able to perform with the orchestra at their community concert.

Some players coach students in the Orchestra Play portion of the Seattle Center Academy that is held each summer—and perform beside them in the final concert. The young participants, who often come from families with very limited resources, are not necessarily serious music students, but rather kids who have not had much opportunity to work on their instrumental skills.



Brass quartet members David Ritt, Mark Robbins, Geoff Bergler and Steve Fissel talk informally with guests at a “Meet the Brass” session that is part of the Meet the Musicians Live program held at Soundbridge just prior to Sunday matinee concerts.

Open rehearsals are among the most popular events for both students and orchestra members. Secondary students observe practice sessions at Benaroya Hall, and one or more musicians chat informally with the kids during intermission—and answer their many questions. “These are enormously valuable,” according to Meighan Pritchard, the symphony staff member who coordinates the programs. “The students love having direct contact with the musicians.”

The players have created several ensembles that perform in schools, and they provide opportunities for conversation at those events, as well. “They go into the classrooms before the concert and talk about their instruments, and what it’s like to be a professional musician. The kids then seem to enjoy the music more because they feel like they have a personal connection,” Meighan observes.

Additional coaching

Orchestra members work with students in several important ways in addition to the programs organized by the symphony. Seattle is blessed with a strong Youth Symphony program, and a number of orchestra members contribute coaching time for the various sections of the Youth Symphony, the top-level orchestra for ➤

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This newsletter reflects the input of dozens of members of the orchestra. The project is guided by:

Cecilia Poellein Buss, violin
Roberta Hansen Downey, cello

Virginia Hunt Luce, violin
Larey McDaniel, clarinet

Nancy Page Griffin, bass

Your suggestions welcomed

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Committed to the community *continued from page 7*

high-school-aged musicians. Steve Fissel has been working with low brass players for nearly 20 years; he has also taught at the youth symphony's two-week summer camp.

It's a rich experience, he says: "I meet with the youth symphony musicians 2-3 times when they are working on a new program—before they go into a full rehearsal. The quality of the musicianship has been very good over the past few years; the kids all take private lessons, as well, and expect to continue with music in some way. These are pretty committed teens; many play in a jazz band as well as the symphony orchestra."

Seattle's Garfield High School has acclaimed programs in both jazz and classical music, and a number of symphony players coach the orchestra players there. Some also work with other schools—middle schools as well

as high schools. Mark Robbins coaches at Washington Middle School, a "feeder" school for Garfield, helping music students enhance their skills so they will be prepared to play at the high school level.

The need for more

What do the musicians wish were different about the outreach programs? They wish there were more of them, with a way to reach many more students: those who are, like the Youth Symphony members, already accomplished young musicians, as well as younger children who are just beginning to think about instrumental music.

Violinist Wesley Fisk has played for the symphony for 35 years, and has visited classrooms to talk to elementary school children about music and the symphony for that entire time. He makes presentations to fifth-graders,

who are preparing to visit Benaroya Hall for a concert as part of the Meet the Beat program. If Wesley had his way, second graders would also be hearing from him and other musicians. "We could have much greater impact," he says, "if we could reach kids before they have decided that sports are 'cool' but music isn't. It would be wonderful if there were funding to start working with children earlier. We could produce more musicians and more music-lovers."

One of the things Wesley wants kids to know: "Music can be better than sports, because nobody loses at a concert." ●

For a complete description of the Seattle Symphony's education and community programs, visit the organization's website at www.seattlesymphony.org.