



**Atlanta
Symphony
Orchestra** **Talent
Development
Program**

Dear Friends,

Just as the original Atlanta Youth Orchestra evolved into the Grammy® Award-winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the former Black Talent Development Program has evolved from its original purpose of increasing audience diversification and serving as a pipeline for Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra participation into the Talent Development Program (TDP) it is today.

The TDP students are now TDP Fellows and the program is divided into three academies: Elementary/Middle School Academy, a Preparatory Academy and a Career Apprentice Program. The TDP provides year-round training, including weekly lessons with master teachers, monthly workshops and career training seminars, frequent opportunities to enjoy live music, master classes with experts in the field, trips to post-secondary training conservatories, networking events and intensive training at nationally-recognized summer music camps.

These experiences give our Fellows a realistic idea of what it takes to be successful, as they strive to achieve the program's mission: acceptance into top music programs in preparation for careers as professional musicians.

The TDP is also evolving how we position ourselves on the national stage in respect to diversity initiatives. We have participated in seminars held by the Mellon Foundation in New York, the New World Symphony in Miami, the Sphinx Organization and the League of American Orchestras in Detroit. I will represent the TDP on a panel at SphinxConnect in February 2018 and at the national

conference of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) in March 2018. In addition, we have received dedicated scholarships from the Peabody Institute, the Boston University Tanglewood Institute (BUTI) and Brevard Music Center. The St. Louis Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta, the Grant Park Diversity Inclusion Project, Houston Symphony's embedded musician program and others have expressed interest in the program and the success of our alums, and Nashville and Philadelphia have launched programs modeled after the TDP.

These examples are just a few proof points of the strides we've made. We continue to advance the program to successfully prepare our TDP Fellows for successful classical music careers. Over the holidays, we will provide our patrons with an easy way to help our six TDP graduating seniors secure the instruments they need for music school. Look for details coming soon! I invite you to join our journey, cheer on our Fellows and support the TDP with your time, talents and resources.

Thank you for your continued support of the Talent Development Program.

Sincerely,
Adrienne Thompson
Manager, Talent Development Program

FALL 2017

TDP ALUMNI

Making an

IMPACT

The TDP's investment in developing talent has yielded high returns over its 24-year history. These returns are evident in metropolitan Atlanta's music education landscape. Alumni like Ismail Akbar are furthering the TDP mission through a career in music education.

Ismail, a cellist, completed the program in 2003 and later received a Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio and his Master of Music degree from Mercer University. He is currently the Cello Teaching Artist with the Atlanta Music Project and adjunct professor of cello and chamber music at Clayton State University. He also performs as a section cellist with the Greenville Symphony and as principal cellist with the North Georgia Chamber Symphony.



Ismail Akbar,
cello
TDP alumnus

The TDP opened the door to many opportunities for Ismail and now he is committed to giving back to his community. He joined the Still Waters Youth Sinfonia, which provided him the opportunity to travel across the country to attend National Association of Negro Musician Conferences. Later, he joined the TDP, which helped him reach the next level and develop his talents more strategically. "When I first joined the TDP, I didn't realize the importance of private lessons," says Akbar. "The Talent Development Program gave me the tools I needed to compete."

Ismail's experience exemplifies that of other TDP alumni like violist Jesse Dixon, flutist Tara Byrdsong, and harpist Angelica Hairston, who were also transformed by their TDP experiences and have built careers in music education. Jessie, a 2002 TDP graduate, is the orchestra director at Ridgeview Charter Middle School in Sandy Springs, Ga. and performs with East West Strings. "The TDP opened doors for me," she says. "It was a beautiful experience that really opened my eyes and my ears to what classical music can be."

"I knew I wanted to go into music before I got to the



Tara Byrdsong,
flute
TDP alumna

in Music Education

Talent Development Program," says Tara. "But I don't think I would have made it as far as I have without the program." She holds a Master of Music degree in flute performance from the University of Missouri – Kansas City and a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Converse College in Spartanburg, S.C.

Angelica completed the Talent Development Program in 2011 and received a Bachelor of Music degree from The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and a Master of Music Industry Leadership degree from Northeastern University. Currently, she is artistic director of the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble, where she provides free harp instruction to more than 80 students in Atlanta's inner-city, while guiding the artistic vision for the nonprofit organization. "Before the TDP, I really enjoyed the harp," she says. "It was something that gave me a sense of belonging, but once I joined the TDP, I had a new community and a new set of mentors and people supporting me on an entirely different level."



Angelica Hairston,
harp
TDP alumna

Giving Back

Today, the learning, mentorship and support that are the legacy of the TDP are being passed on to new generations through TDP alumni. "It's my duty as a teacher to expose my students to the symphony," says Tara, whose appreciation and understanding of orchestral music was deepened by the ASO performances she was required to attend while in the program. She hopes that by exposing her students to classical music, she is laying a foundation for classical music appreciation and patronage, whether they choose to major in music or not. "This is my way of helping build diverse classical music audiences. Students need to experience the music and appreciate this gem in their community. They may feel that classical music isn't for them, but it is for them and I help build that value."

The program has always focused on helping Fellows develop interpersonal skills that can give them an edge as they pursue their goals. Ismail Akbar takes this lesson to his students. "A big part of being a successful musician is being a good communicator, someone people want to be around." That's why he encourages his students to have a positive attitude and be approachable. He believes his positive demeanor has helped him build a strong professional network to secure performance opportunities in the U.S. and abroad.

Like Ismail, Jessie and Tara, Angelica understands the positive influence she is having in the Atlanta community. "I'm in a space where I can teach at a school where more than 90 percent of the students are of color," says Angelica. "So, I'm able to make an actual, tangible impact every single day. Working with students, exposing them to classical music, exposing them to an instrument they likely would never have had access to if it weren't for the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble."

Ambassadors of the Music Profession

At a time when schools are emphasizing science, technology, engineering and math – STEM – many talented students may not be getting the message that music offers a viable career path. Tara Byrdsong is in the school systems delivering that message.

"I've had parents come to me and try to pull their bright students out of my class because they wanted them to focus on STEM classes," says Tara. "I always tell the parents that playing music is not just about the music itself; children are learning character development. They are learning how to work at something for an extended amount of time before they get the award. They're getting delayed gratification, how to stick with something over time and learning how to figure out problems."

Jessie also advocates music careers. "Music is not an easy field," she explains. "But at the same time, there are many outlets other than the classical music field that students can get into—for example, teaching. Teaching is critically important, without teachers, who will guide the next Yo-Yo Ma, Drewe Ford or Ismail Akbar?"

Bringing About Change

TDP alumni are bringing about change in the community through performances, private lessons and community activities to help diversify the arts. Angelica Hairston launched a program called Challenge the Stats, a concert series that celebrates high-caliber artists of color and sheds light on the vast underrepresentation of minorities in the performing arts: "It's been a wonderful experience to give back to the TDP and the Atlanta community with these concerts that celebrate the work people here are doing."

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Michael

MOORE

The contributions ASO Principal Tubist Michael Moore has made to the TDP are evident in both the students he has taught and in the very fabric of the program.

Michael, who marks his 50th season with the ASO this year, has been involved with the program since its inception in the early 1990s. He worked with Azira G. Hill and other founders to determine how the program would look, which ASO musicians would teach, how students would qualify, the number of lessons the program would provide and more.

As Michael states, “we figured it out as we went along, and it’s gotten to be a pretty well-oiled machine.”

Building the TDP

Figuring it out was no small task. “In the early days, we had to beg people to audition because no one knew what it was,” says Michael. “There weren’t a lot of people signing up, so we had to find people who we thought would be interested.”

Over time, Michael worked with the TDP founders to fine-tune the program and establish the guidelines in today’s TDP Handbook. “We increased the requirements for concert attendance. Every little requirement that a student might think frivolous came into being because of necessity.”

The program’s mission required a firm foundation and structure. “Our job was to prepare TDP graduates for conservatory or a top-tier music school, so that they would have a chance for successful auditions, ultimately increasing the number of minority musicians in U.S. orchestras.”

He emphasizes the importance of adequate funding: “The financial support from Azira G. Hill was, and still is, instrumental in getting the program off the ground. There was no ASO education department in those days, so her passion for the program, along with her financial support were critical.”



Michael Moore,
ASO Principal Tuba
and TDP supporter

The Making of a Musician

Serving as a TDP instructor not only helped Michael identify ways to improve the program, but it provided him with the opportunity to mold and shape TDP Fellows.

He does this by sharing what he has learned through his experiences. “I really want my students to be all-around musicians, not just people who can learn a solo and 17 excerpts,” he says. “I want to make sure that they’re someone who has a real grasp of what music is and can play like a great musician.”

Michael’s father, E.W. Moore, was a longtime ASO tubist under Henry Sopkin. He was also a band director and was in the ASO when the orchestra was not full-time. “When he was in the orchestra, I went to many concerts,” he recalls.

Michael’s father taught him to play tuba, and he also learned to play other instruments, including piano and bass. As a teenager, he started getting gigs in Atlanta. “I played at the then-new Hyatt Regency Hotel,” he recalls. “I also played dances, weddings and Broadway shows on electric and string bass, along with Dixieland tuba.”

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT:

Michael Moore



Michael Moore's current students: Joshua Williams, Errol Rhoden III and Quantell Gipson III.

In his late teens, his father became deathly ill and Michael took over his music work, throwing Michael headfirst into music as a career. "I discovered I was ready for the life of a musician. I knew that is what I wanted to do."

Michael graduated from high school a year early and attended Georgia State University, which at the time had a world-class brass department (ASO Principal Horn Brice Andrus also came from that program). His second year at GSU, he auditioned and won the ASO position, and four years later concurrently earned his degree there in Music Literature.

"Fortunately, I was ready enough," he says. "They gave me a chance. I was 18 years old and very fortunate to get the job."

Since then, Michael has built a dynamic career. He teaches at Emory University, is the Treasurer of the International Conference of Symphony & Opera Musicians, VP of the Atlanta Federation of Musicians and President of the Atlanta Brass Society, Inc. He also is a founding member of the Atlanta Symphony Brass Quintet, where he serves as Artistic Director. He directed the Emory Brass Ensemble for 15 years, and the Atlanta Symphony Community Brass Ensemble, along with continuing to coach the brass section of the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Guiding TDP Fellows

Michael Moore has always been a great resource for TDP Fellows who aspire to have a successful career. He teaches them how to navigate the profession, because making a living playing the tuba can be challenging. "There aren't many openings for tuba because people tend to play the tuba a long time – 30, 40 years," he explains. "And there's rarely an opening unless someone gets a better job, retires or dies."

TDP Fellows get good advice from Michael that can prepare them for success as the field becomes increasingly competitive. "I tell them that they need to make sure they have plenty of options," he says. I don't discourage them from getting a degree in music education if they have an interest in that. Music education and being able to play in a brass quintet are ways to make a living. I also don't discourage them from learning a secondary instrument. In my case, and in my father's case, having knowledge of the double bass proved very helpful."

According to Michael, it also helps to be entrepreneurial. "In many cases," he says, "tuba players are the people who run brass quintets because we have fewer options than, trumpet players and horn players, and even trombone players. I encourage them to learn to play Dixieland, and get a group together, so they can secure jobs for the group, which is easier than marketing yourself as a solo tuba player."

Michael is currently teaching three TDP Fellows, who are all high school seniors. In addition to assisting with their applications to conservatories, he is helping them find the appropriate instruments. One of his TDP fellows doesn't have a tuba and another only has one. "You have to have at least two tubas – and the average cost is at least \$6,500 per tuba," he says.

Michael's 50-year career with the ASO is an excellent example for TDP Fellows. What does Michael see in his future? "I will keep playing as long as it's fun, and most of the time it is," he says. "I enjoy it. I enjoy teaching – especially talented TDP students. They're a joy to teach because they're serious. They're more serious than many college students, and that's why I believe they will all be successful."

TDP FELLOWS

KUDOS



Inaugural preconcert chamber recital participants (from left/back): Ken Meltzer (Program Annotator), Phillip Williams (trombone), Joseph Brown (cello), Errol Rhoden III (tuba), Triniti Rives (clarinet), Adrienne Thompson (TDP Manager), Angela Leeper (bass), Alisha Zamore (clarinet)

Current Fellows

Phillip Williams and **Vincent Tapia IV (trombones)** participated in a master class with Dave Murray, Peabody Trombone professor and National Symphony Orchestra, acting assistant principal trombone.

Eight Fellows participated in the inaugural TDP preconcert chamber recital on Nov. 4 in Symphony Hall, hosted by Ken Meltzer.

Class of 2011

Shaquille Southwell (clarinet) joined the [Georgia Symphony Orchestra as Second Clarinet in June](#).

Drewe Ford (viola) will perform at Spivey Hall at Clayton State University in the Young People's Concert Series on Monday, Nov. 6. Ford, who is known on social media as @ThatViolaKid, profiled in an Oct. 11 Thrillist.com article, "[Meet the Musician Who Wants to Be the Neil deGrasse Tyson of Classical](#)." He was also featured in an Oct. 2 StringsMagazine.com article, "[6 Rising Stars on the Power of Instagram](#)."

Xavier Foley (bass) performed a solo recital on October 21 in the Harriman-Jewell Series in Kansas City, MO. He also performed Bottesini Concerto No. 2 with the Orchard Park Symphony in Buffalo, N.Y. on Oct. 27.

Class of 2005

Stanford Thompson (trumpet), founder and executive director of Play on Philly, was featured last September in a Forbes magazine article, "[Why One Millennial Musician](#)

[Is Working To Save Music Education.](#)" Play on

Philly is non-profit organization, inspired by the social development and music education program of Venezuela called El Sistema, that seeks to enrich the lives of Philadelphia youth by providing daily musical instruction in communities that have little access to music education.

Class of 2003

Stephen Lawrence (violin) was featured in My Vinings Smyrna, Fall 2017. He is currently the 9-12th grade IB Music and AP Music Theory Teacher, and Director of Orchestras at North Atlanta High School. https://issuu.com/atlantabestmedia/docs/my_vinings_smyrna_fall_2017

Eric Thompson III (bass) completed the TDP in 2002. He is currently an adjunct professor of applied double bass at University of North Carolina at Charlotte.



Phillip Williams, Dave Murray and Vincent Tapia IV



Eric Thompson III with double-bassist Ranann Meyer after a performance by Meyer's trio, Time for Tree, at Davidson College.

TDP
FELLOWS

in the

COMMUNITY

Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra

Joseph Brown
Errol Rhoden III
Joshua Williams
Alisha Zamore
Triniti Rives
Phillip Williams
Corban Johnson
Angela Leeper

Atlanta Youth Wind Symphony

Alisha Zamore
Vincent Tapia IV
Quentell Gipson III

Emory Wind Ensemble

Quentell Gipson III

Emory Youth Symphony Orchestra

Errol Rhoden III
Vincent Tapia IV

The Atlanta area has a rich assortment of community youth orchestras, and this season TDP fellows are making their mark as part of these ensembles.

Metropolitan Youth Symphony Orchestra

Jaia Alli
Brandon Leonard
Juliyan Martinez
Roland Mason
Joshua Sheperd
Ojochilemi Okoka
Taylor Tookes
Zoe Willingham
Alex Carrillo

Gwinnett County Youth Symphony

Ethan Anchiraico

Urban Youth Harp Ensemble

Jabari Freeman
Micah Blair



NOV 12

Atlanta Symphony Hall

MUSICALE

Chelsea Sharpe,
violin
TDP alumna

ALL
SEATS
\$10

Don't Miss the Musicale Concert on Nov. 12, 2017 at 3:00 pm in Atlanta Symphony Hall.

TDP Fellows will perform selections from Beethoven, Stravinsky, Haydn, John Williams and more.

The program will also feature a performance by TDP alumna and New World Symphony fellow Chelsea Sharpe, violin.

For tickets, visit aso.org/TDP

SUPPORT

INVEST

We invite you to support our efforts by making a gift today. Be sure to select the Azira G. Hill Scholarship Fund when asked where you would like your donation applied. Thank you for your continued support!

Visit aso.org/TDP

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in the Next
Generation of
Classical Musicians
by Supporting the
TDP Today



APPLY TO TDP

Applications for the 2018/19 season are now being accepted through Feb. 28, 2018.

Visit aso.org/TDP for more information.

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