

CHAMBER ENSEMBLES

by Diane Dickson

"As a teacher, I have always appreciated all of the musicians that have visited my school to expose the students to a musical performance and explanation of their instruments and the music they are listening to."

"I grew up in Fort Wayne and have fond memories of seeing the talented musicians even come to my school to play."

"The Fort Wayne Philharmonic has provided amazing educational programs to so many school age students, enriching their lives..."

These comments from our supporters show the impact Philharmonic musicians have had from their work in small chamber ensembles. The ensemble program has been a major part of full-time musicians' jobs for decades. From schools to long-term care facilities in Allen and surrounding counties, Philharmonic chamber ensembles have served the diverse needs of our community.

The first ensemble was a string quartet, established in the 1960's. Made up of the principal string musicians, the group began giving in-school educational concerts. During the 1970's, the woodwind and brass quintets and the harp and percussion ensemble were

added. These musicians became full-time "core" orchestra members, and included all of the principal players. The musicians' availability to work during daytime hours enabled the Philharmonic to expand the elementary in-school program to 52 schools in surrounding counties.

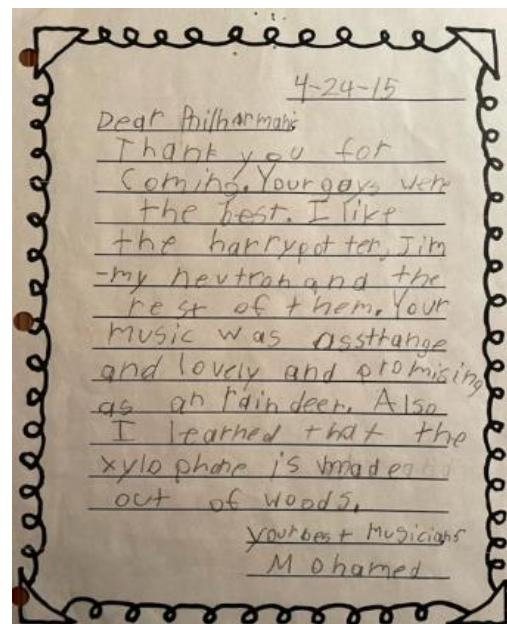
Throughout the next two decades, the Philharmonic increased the number of core musicians to 44, making it possible for the Philharmonic to create new programs to reach new student populations. An ensemble needing additional full-time musicians was the "Hip Hop Pete" group, who presented an anti-drug abuse education program for middle school students. Then by the mid 1990's, Philharmonic ensembles began playing for pre-K students in a program designed to assist teachers to use music in their classrooms.

Since the earliest days, school concerts have doubled. There are now 10 ensembles comprised of 44 full-time core musicians. Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Philharmonic musicians had been performing around 210 educational performances each season at elementary and preschools. They have

played at approximately 100 schools in Fort Wayne Community, East Allen and Southwest Allen County Schools, and Huntington, DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble and Steuben County school districts.

The musicians create their own ensemble presentations. For school concerts, each group searches for repertoire and develops themes that are both entertaining and in accordance with state curriculum standards.

According to Anne Lewellen, Principal Harpist and member of the Resonators ensemble, "Kids had never, ever seen a live performance until the ensemble went to their school.. It is really



An ecstatic response from a student to the Resonators

wonderful getting feedback from them.”

Kevin Piekarski, Assistant Principal Bassist, echoes that sentiment. “These concerts are so rewarding because it is many kids’ first exposure to live performance,” he said. “We try to make these concerts as positive educationally and as fun as possible. And the kids love trying to ‘play’ the bass when I have them draw the bow across the strings.”

Violist Deb Graham says the students are fascinated by their instruments. “The kids have guessed my viola as a trombone, banjo and various other wild instruments,” she said. “I love watching their awe, and I remember a time two years ago when their wildest applause came from our quartet’s arrangement of Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*.”

In 1986, the Philharmonic began its great partnership with Audiences Unlimited. Founded by Lillian Embick, Audiences Unlimited is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing music and the arts to residents in long-term care facilities. Over time, the number of these performances by Philharmonic wind, string and brass groups have grown to 88

each season in Allen and surrounding counties. They have played at 37 long-term care facilities and L.I.F.E. Adult Day Academy, which serves adults with cognitive and developmental disabilities.

The expanded ensemble program has enabled Audiences Unlimited to “bring music to people who don’t have access,” says Executive Director Anna Ross. “More people are aging in our community, and we need to find ways to serve them. It is

favorites. Even the Beatles’ *Eleanor Rigby* and Deep Purple’s *Smoke on the Water* have been on the program!”

“As a performer, playing at a long-term care facility is a unique experience. When you are so close to the audience, the intimacy of the performance experience goes to another level. The audience witnesses the interaction between the members of the group-- they can hear you breathe together,” said Kevin.



Kevin Piekarski (center) with fellow string quintet members

Philharmonic ensembles are not currently scheduled to perform in the schools and long-term care facilities at this time. Campbell MacDonald, the orchestra’s Principal Clarinetist, says he is optimistic that the limitations related to the Covid-19 pandemic will improve so his woodwind quintet can

resume its full playing activities.

“We are striving to get back as conditions allow for us to serve and present art to all corners of the community,” said Campbell. “Our education mission is embedded in the community and has driven the expansion of the full-time core orchestra over time. Chamber ensembles have been key to increasing the Philharmonic’s community outreach, and we are eager to continue that work,” he said.

critical to provide musical experiences to people where they live and where they are,” she said.

For residents in long-term care facilities, the groups tailor their repertoire for lighter classics and popular pieces. “Our string quintet intentionally plays less ‘classical’ music,” said Kevin. “We like to feature recognizable pieces like Joplin rags; or Mancini, Gershwin, and Rodgers and Hammerstein

MEET THE “RESONATORS”

By Adrian Mann

Who are the “Resonators?” We are a unique ensemble of players from the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, consisting of harp, violin, xylophone, drums and bass. Our group was first developed in the mid-1970’s when there were less than 20 full-time musicians in the orchestra (there are now 44 full-time players). Once the string, woodwind and brass groups were formed, there were 3 players left over: harp and 2 percussion. So these players were tasked with forming a viable musical ensemble. Since there was very little, if any, published music for such a group, we musicians drew on our experience finding music for our instruments which could be adjusted to fit the ensemble.

After a year or two, the bass was reassigned from the string quintet to the “Harp and Percussion” group, as it was then called, and the “Resonators” name developed from instrument demonstrations. The long tubes that project downward underneath the xylophone keys or bars are called “resonators,” but the harp and bass have hollow wooden chambers that help resonate their sound as well. We arranged many new compositions and expanded our repertoire.

Recently, the string configuration of ensembles left one violin available, which was

then added to the Resonators. This opened up new possibilities for musical expression, and we arranged many new pieces. Our repertoire now features selections drawn from Ragtime, Spanish guitar music, movie scores, orchestral favorites, traditional folk tunes, opera, jazz, and popular songs.

Here are brief resumes of our current members, showing the depth of experience we bring to the group:



A student drawing of the Resonators

Anne Preucil Lewellen has been Principal Harp of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic since 1987. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Harp Performance from Oberlin College Conservatory of Music and an Artist Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music. Anne has performed with many other orchestras, including the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Pops Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony, and the Utah Symphony and Opera. Anne spends time each summer in Jackson Hole, WY as a member of the Grand Teton Music Festival, a position she has held since 1999.

Raised in North Carolina, **Timothy Tan** attended the North Carolina School of the Arts, Boston University, and Carnegie Mellon University. He was a member of the West Virginia Symphony before joining the Fort Wayne Philharmonic. Timothy spends his summers, with his wife Colleen, as violinists of the Lake String Quartet performing at the Lake Hotel in Yellowstone National Park. Currently Assistant Concertmaster of the Philharmonic, he joined the orchestra in 2007.

Principal Percussionist with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, **Alison Chorn** was born and raised in New Brighton, Minnesota. She earned her bachelor’s degree in music performance from Cleveland State University in 2014. She has performed with numerous American orchestras of note,

including the Cleveland Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, and Pittsburgh Symphony.

Kevin Kosnik has been a member of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic percussion section since 2018. Kevin holds degrees in percussion performance from Northwestern University and New England Conservatory of Music. He has performed with many orchestras including the San Diego Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Hawaii Symphony

Orchestra, and Civic Orchestra of Chicago

A founding member of the “Resonators,” **Adrian Mann** has been with the group since 1975. He attended Peabody Conservatory and Catholic University earning master’s and doctorate degrees. Aside from Principal Bass with the Philharmonic, he has served as Stage Manager, Librarian, Arranger, and Director of Gallery Concerts. He has performed with the Richmond Symphony, Orchestra International Iuventus, and Bach Choir of Bethlehem and was Music Director at St. Joseph Hessen Cassel Catholic Church for 20 years.

Over many seasons we have developed three programs for our educational presentations which can be alternated depending on which school we are visiting.

These are: 1. Melody, Harmony and Rhythm—a program that demonstrates how music is constructed; 2. Music from Around the World—students choose different flags and then songs are played from those countries; and 3. Music Inspired by Animals, such as “Waltzing Cat,” “Baby Elephant Walk,” “Pink Panther,” and

“Turkey in the Straw.” For recitals, promotional, and senior living appearances, we offer appropriate selections from these programs, adding additional concert repertoire featuring marimba, vibraphone and glockenspiel (played by our two versatile percussionists).

During our school programs, there is much interaction with the students. In between pieces, we each explain and demonstrate our instruments, encouraging questions and comments as we go along. Included in each program is a



The Resonators performing at the James Cultural Plaza in Auburn, Indiana

“hands-on” experience, where several students are chosen at random to join the group playing small percussion instruments such as triangle, woodblock, tambourine, and maracas. Other than being signaled when to start and stop, the children are free to play whatever rhythms they

choose. This heightens the level of engagement as the remaining students are always enthralled to see their friends performing with the adult musicians. There is much laughter and shouts of encouragement, especially when an over-enthusiastic student drops the triangle or keeps playing once the song is over.

While it may seem difficult to imagine how familiar music can be effectively presented by this somewhat motley group of instruments, the resulting arrangements are surprisingly satisfying. Obviously, the drums

control rhythmic elements of the music, but the violin, xylophone, harp, and even occasionally the bass can handle melodic assignments, while all these can provide harmonic and foundational support as well.

We hope you will have the opportunity to hear our ensemble perform live to understand how effectively five

seemingly random instruments from the orchestra can present a fulfilling musical experience. Our performances give audiences of all ages the chance to see and hear us up close, without the distance and formality of the typical concert hall presentation.

Our Players' Voice is published by the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Players' Association. Our writers include Diane Dickson, retired Philharmonic oboist and Adrian Mann, Principal Bassist. For more information, visit our website at www.fwpmusicians.com. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).