



Bassist Maurice Todd (center rear) and cellist Blake-Anthony Johnson (center right, to Todd's front and left), two of the inaugural musicians in the CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship program.

PIPELINE TO Inclusion

More and more orchestras are launching fellowships to increase musician diversity. What are these programs like for participants? The inaugural musicians in the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music's CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship program share their first-person perspectives.

Momentum is growing for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the orchestra field, perhaps most visibly in the rising number of orchestra fellowship programs, which have the goal of increasing diversity in musician ranks. Several programs have been launched in the past year or two by orchestras of every size, while other fellowship programs have been around for much longer. Many aim specifically to increase the number of professional African American and Latino musicians, two persistently under-represented groups in the orchestral field. These programs advance already well-trained musicians to the next level in order to succeed professionally, provide mentorship and guidance from orchestra musicians, give participants the experience of being embedded within a professional orchestra, and offer financial support that allows emerging musicians to focus on refining their musical and audition skills. As League of American Orchestras President and CEO Jesse Rosen has said, “The biggest part of addressing diversity of musicians on stage is growing the pipeline.”

At the advanced end of that pipeline are orchestra fellowship programs. One of the newest, launched in 2016, is the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra’s **CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship** program, funded with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The fellows, all Artist Diploma candidates at CCM, receive financial support and mentoring for two years. The Sphinx Organization, the Detroit-based nonprofit dedicated to promoting diversity in the arts, particularly in classical music, is serving as an external evaluator and adviser.

The CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowships program is just one of many similar initiatives around the country. A cross-section of some current musician fellows programs includes the **IRIS Orchestra** in Germantown, Tennessee, which runs a fellowship program now in its second year for string musicians who identify as

CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Cellist Diana Flores in performance (center) within the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra cello section



Fellows family (left to right): Fellow Emilio Carlo, CSO Violist Joanne Wojtowicz, Fellow Blake-Anthony Johnson, Fellow Vijeta Sathyaraj, CSO Principal Cello Ilya Finkelshteyn, Fellow Diana Flores, CSO Music Director Louis Langrée, CSO Violinist Stacey Woolley, CSO Assistant Principal Cello Norman E. Johns, CSO Principal Bass Owen Lee, CSO Concertmaster Timothy Lees, Fellow Maurice Todd.

Black/African American, Latino, or both. Musicians perform with IRIS Orchestra and Music Director Michael Stern, are mentored by IRIS musicians and guest artists, and receive a salary and housing in Memphis. This year’s participants are cellist Dara Hankins, violinist Marcos Santos, and violist Gabriel Polycarpo. The **Minnesota Orchestra’s** newly launched Rosemary and David Good Fellowships support the career development of young musicians of African American, Latin American, and Native American descent. Myles Blakemore, a trombonist from Dallas, and Jason Tanksley, a tuba player from Eastpointe, Michigan, just started their two-year positions in the program. The **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra’s** EQT Orchestra Training Program for African American Musicians (OTPAAM) is a two-year pre-professional program during which musicians work with members of the orchestra to train and prepare for professional auditions and performance opportunities. Cellist Ryan Murphy, a participant in the 2011-13 EQT program,

won a position with the San Antonio Symphony in 2012, and 2013-15 Fellow Adedeji Ogunfolu, a horn player, won a position with the San Antonio Symphony during his first year of the fellowship. The **Chicago Sinfonietta's** Project Inclusion string fellowships at Chicago's Grant Park Orchestra, now in their fifth year, give musicians the chance to rehearse and be paid to perform with the Grant Park Orchestra during the annual Grant Park Music Festival. This year's musicians were violinists Teddy Wiggins and Robert Switala, violist Danielle Taylor, and cellist Denielle Wilson. The string fellowships are part of the Sinfonietta's wide-ranging Project Inclusion, which has programs to develop diverse and emerging musicians, conductors, and administrators. In New York City, **Orpheus Chamber Orchestra's** Orpheus Fellowship Program, launched in 2015, is aimed at emerging and pre-professional musicians, with special encouragement for those from underrepresented communities. Orpheus Fellows have included cellist Khari Joyner, clarinetist Ian Tyson, violist Celia Hatton, and bassoonist Alexander Davis. Davis is a current fellow at the **Detroit Symphony Orchestra's** decades-old African American Orchestral Fellowship Program, in which participants have the

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opportunity to perform with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra during the regular season. Weeks not spent playing in the orchestra are devoted to individual coaching, mentoring, and training in audition techniques. Detroit program alumni have gone on to professional orchestral careers, among them Alexander Laing, principal clarinet in the Phoenix Symphony; Douglas Cardwell, principal timpani in the New Mexico Philharmonic; and Kenneth Thompkins, principal trombone of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

When Rosen spoke before the Association of British Orchestras on the topic of diversity at American orchestras in January 2017, he pointed out that the scope and scale of increasing musician diversity make for a challenge that needs be ad-



CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Vijeta Sathyaraj (rear center) in the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra violin section. Her stand partner is CSO musician Rebecca Fryxell.

dressed from many angles—and talked about what it might take to get there. One oft-cited statistic: Latinos make up 3 percent of U.S. orchestras' members, according to 2014 figures from the League of American Orchestras. African Ameri-

cans comprise 2 percent. To help address this field-wide challenge, the League has adopted a multi-pronged approach. It has commissioned and published two major research studies: *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*, reporting on gender and ethnic/racial diversity in orchestras among musicians, conductors, staff, executives, and board members; and *Forty Years of Fellowships: A Study of Orchestras' Efforts to Include African American and Latino Musicians*, an in-depth examination of orchestras' past efforts to diversify their musician ranks with fellowships for African American and Latino musicians. The League has organized national task forces and annual diversity forums where orchestras, musicians, administrators, and other stakeholders are incubating major collec-

tive efforts to address audition preparation and support, board and staff diversity, organizational culture, music education, and mentorships. The League's online Diversity and Inclusion Resource Center at www.americanorchestras.org/diversityresources offers hundreds of resources including practical advice, best practices in diversity and inclusion at orchestras and other fields, the business case for diversity, and publications, reading lists, and research. Sparked by the League, a National Diversity Audition Fund being launched in 2018 will provide financial support and training opportunities for orchestral auditions for musicians from underrepresented communities. Funding will come from orchestras themselves as well as foundations, corporations, and individuals, and will establish a multi-year pool of resources.

Among noteworthy programs for younger musicians is the long-running **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Talent Development Program**, in its 23rd year of providing music education for musicians of color in the Atlanta area. The **Dallas Symphony Young Strings** program, established in 1992, works with string musicians from underrepresented groups; recently they performed onstage with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra during the orchestra's annual springtime SOLUNA

festival. The **Nashville Symphony's** new Accelerando program, which launched in 2016, focuses on fourth- through ninth-graders of diverse ethnic backgrounds who dream of pursuing a professional orchestral career. Those selected for the program receive instruction, mentorship, and performance experience, as well as help with applying to music schools. An industry leader in this area is the **Sphinx Organization**, founded by violinist Aaron Dworin in 1997, which has an array of programs meant to address the lack of black and Latino musicians. Sphinx's programs include ones for young musicians as well as early-career musicians, and range from education and artist development to developing and sponsoring touring ensembles. SphinxConnect, the organization's annual conference in Detroit, brings together leaders in diversity in classical music and the performing arts.

What's it like for the musicians in diversity fellowship programs? What's the perspective of the emerging musicians who are actually participating? We caught up with the first five CSO/CCM Diversity Fellows, who have just finished their first year in the program. Each Fellow receives a full tuition scholarship from CCM, plus a \$10,000 annual graduate stipend and a one-time Graduate School Dean's Excel-

lence Award of \$3,000. Fellows each receive \$8,000 per season for performing with the CSO the equivalent of five weeks. In addition to working with their CSO mentors and performing with the orchestra, Fellows also participate in community engagement and educational activities. In

“Having the word ‘diversity’ in the title of the Diversity Fellowship is important. It means that the CSO and my colleagues and I are trying to break down barriers and bring change into the world of music.” —Emilio Carlo

August, four new fellows arrived for the next class of CSO/CCM fellowships.

Here are first-person accounts from the five inaugural CSO/CCM Diversity Fellows.

Emilio Carlo, viola

Emilio Carlo, a native of the Bronx, New York, is a resident of Washington D.C. He holds a bachelor's degree from CCM in viola performance, and studies with Jan Grüning of the Ariel Quartet. He has attended the Aspen Music Festival and was a 2012 recipient of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Brewster Award for young artists. His Diversity Fellowship mentor is CSO Violist Joanne Wojtowicz.

What has been the most valuable aspect of the program so far?

I believe every aspect of the fellowship has played its part in making the experience beneficial for all of the fellows. This program has given us the opportunity to perform regularly with a major U.S. sym-

phony orchestra, in addition to having weekly lessons at CCM and private master classes with visiting artists/pedagogues—all while receiving a very generous stipend. We are also able to experience this with four (now eight) additional colleagues! The performance experience I've gained this year will stay with me far into my musical career, and I'm glad I was able to learn and share the journey with my friends.

How has your playing improved over the season?

This past year in the CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship has been incredibly productive and eye-opening. Getting the chance to rehearse and perform with an orchestra of such a high caliber forced me to increase my levels of focus while practicing and onstage. In turn, I have noticed drastic changes in my approach to the viola and I am very much looking forward to the many musical discoveries yet to come in my final year with the CSO.

What has your relationship with your CSO mentor been like?

My CSO mentor, Joanne Wojtowicz, has been nothing but incredible in my first year of the program. She continues to push my level of self-expectation, and there have been multiple “ah-ha” moments in the practice room after discussing an excerpt or technical challenge with her. We've also become great friends over the past year, and playing with her onstage is never a dull moment. I can't wait to share a stand with her again when Music Hall re-opens in October.

What has been a favorite memory or experience from the first year?

My fondest memory from this past year was having the opportunity to play in a private coaching for Cincinnati Symphony Music Director Louis Langrée. He was



CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Emilio Carlo (center) in the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra viola section



CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Emilio Carlo with his mentor, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Violist Joanne Wojtowicz

speaking at a reception following an afternoon performance and stated that if any of the fellows had upcoming auditions and wanted a “second opinion,” he’d be happy to hear us. I had an audition the following week, and on a whim I asked him if he would be available to hear me play on such short notice. To my surprise, I found



CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Diana Flores with her mentor, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Principal Cello Ilya Finkelshteyn

myself playing for maestro Langrée two days later in the basement of the Taft Theatre a few hours before a performance. It’s been a thrill to work and discuss with the maestro—and even better to know that he strongly supports the students of the fellowship.

What’s the one thing you would want the world to know about this program?

One thing I’d want the world to know about the Diversity Fellowship is just how important the word “diversity” is in the title. It doesn’t mean that the level of expectation is lower compared to other fellowships, or that my colleagues and I were given an opportunity simply because of the color of our skin or because of our backgrounds. It means that the CSO and my colleagues and I are trying to break down barriers and bring change into the world of music. I feel that I must work twice

as hard to make it in this business because, in a way, the odds are stacked against me. It’s already difficult enough to win an orchestral audition, but fewer than 5 percent of American orchestra musicians are musicians of color. I hope that through this fellowship along with others such as Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Minnesota that we can increase that percentage in the years to come.

Diana Flores, cello

A native of Costa Rica, Diana Flores started playing cello at age nine at the Instituto Nacional de Musica in San José. Ten years later, Flores moved to Boston to complete her undergraduate studies at the Longy School of Music, where she studied under Mihail Jójatu. Flores holds a master’s degree in music from the Chicago College of Performing Arts. She has performed with the Boston Pops and the Boston Philharmonic, was a Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center in 2012 and 2013, and

is a former member of Youth Orchestra of the Americas. In 2013, she became a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, a two-year training program with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. While there, she joined the MusiCorps String Quartet, a music education and advocacy program in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Park Dis-

tricts. Her Diversity Fellowship mentor is Cincinnati Symphony Principal Cello Ilya Finkelshteyn.

What has been the most valuable aspect of the program so far?

The most valuable aspect of this program is being able to perform with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra on a regular basis. Another important aspect of the program is the partnership with CCM. As Artist Diploma students, we are able to take weekly private lessons and perform chamber music and solo recitals every semester.

How has your playing improved over the season?

Constant practice makes you improve, but being able to perform in a professional setting where you can have direct feedback from your stand partner and mentor really helps you refine your orchestral skills.

What has your relationship with your CSO mentor been like?

My relationship with my mentor has been a bit different, I think, from the other fellows because my mentor is also my teacher at CCM. And since he is the principal cellist in the CSO, I can ask him questions about *divisis*, bowings, and strokes, and he can also advise on a specific conductor’s tempo and interpretation, which makes me feel more comfortable going into the first rehearsal.

What has been a favorite memory or experience from the first year?

I particularly enjoyed playing Rachmaninoff’s Symphony No. 2 with conductor Edo de Waart; it’s a beautiful piece with a great cello part. I also enjoyed working with conductor Gilbert Varga on a program of Roussel and Stravinsky.

Blake-Anthony Johnson, cello

A native of Atlanta, Blake-Anthony Johnson began playing cello at age 12 and was self-taught until age 18. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Vanderbilt University and has studied with Cleveland Orchestra cellists Bryan Dumm and Alan Harrell, among others. Johnson is former chair and founding member of the Music Education and Youth Initiative for underprivileged children in the Nashville metropolitan area. He was a CSO/CCM diversity fellow for the 2016-17 season, after which he left to take a position as coordinator of the New World Symphony’s Impromptu



CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Blake-Anthony Johnson with Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Assistant Principal Cello Norman E. Johns, one of two CSO musicians who mentored Johnson

music series in Miami Beach, Florida. His CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship mentors were Norman E. Johns and Alan Rafferty.

What was the most valuable aspect of the program?

Being onstage with collectively hundreds of years of orchestral experience is extremely inspiring. Playing with the CSO gave me a clear understanding of the level required to be and remain in a great orchestra, but most importantly it gave me the confidence that it is obtainable. This confidence has been the greatest thing I've developed while in Cincinnati, and has completely changed my approach to playing the cello.

How did your playing improve over the season?

My time with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra was an opportunity to focus solely on my playing as a cellist and artist, while also learning about how I could and would make the role of an orchestral musician my own and unique to my beliefs, experiences, and goals. How much or little I got out of the experience was largely based on my willingness not just to work hard but also experiment, ask questions, and fail.

What was your relationship with your CSO mentor like?

The relationship with my CSO mentors, Norman E. Johns and Alan Rafferty, has been a real treasure for me, and took on a life of its own. My relationships with Tim Lees, the concertmaster, conductors John

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—Vijeta Sathyaraj

Russell Morris and Louis Langrée—as well as the entire cello section and so many others in the orchestra—were really great for my development not only as a cellist but also a person, which to me is far more important.

What was a favorite memory or experience from the first year?

A memory I'll remember forever is performing the Dvořák Cello Concerto with the CSO in May 2017. Being asked to perform as a soloist with the CSO was a very public display of support and trust in me that I'm extremely thankful for.

What's the one thing you would want the world to know about this program?

In my opinion, it's crucial for everyone to understand the history of orchestras in relation to women and people of color, both here in the U.S and abroad. In short, it is not great. Experiencing first-hand the enormous influence foundations and private donors have in encouraging art institutions to play a more active role in diversity has been amazing. This fellowship on very basic level puts a spotlight on the benefits of having the stage of musicians as diverse as the audience we wish to draw into the concert hall.

It is my goal and hope that the world sees the larger picture that this “fellowship puzzle” is a part of. It is crucial to connect the dots of what makes diversity difficult in classical music directly to very real problems outside the concert hall. Once that connection is made, no matter how uncomfortable it may make an individual, I think communities and orchestras will interact differently. If a fellowship helps move the dial to more honest discussion and action, I'm all for it!

Vijeta Sathyaraj, violin

Born in Macau, China, Vijeta Sathyaraj began violin studies in the Philippines at age three. She studied with Fan Ting at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and graduated from California's Idyllwild Arts Academy. She holds a bachelor of music degree from Oberlin Conservatory and a master of music de-

gree from Florida's Lynn Conservatory of Music. In 2004, Sathyaraj organized and performed in a piano trio to raise money for development work in Hanoi, Vietnam. She says her commitment to outreach and diversifying audiences to Western classical music is what led her to apply to CCM. Her CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship mentor is Stacey Woolley.

What has been the most valuable aspect of the program so far?

The experience of playing in a top orchestra and working with and having accessibility to exceptional players. Each player's input is invaluable and has been a great help.

How has your playing improved over the season?

Being expected to fit into a violin section of the highest caliber required and enabled me to play at my highest level and greatly raised my awareness as to how



CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Vijeta Sathyaraj with her mentor, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Violinist Stacey Woolley

to blend in a section and perform in the CSO.

What has your relationship with your CSO mentor been like?

Open and comfortable. My mentor, Stacey Woolley, is always willing to lend an ear and offer help.

What has been a favorite memory or experience from the first year?

“This fellowship on very basic level puts a spotlight on the benefits of having the stage of musicians as diverse as the audience we wish to draw into the concert hall.”

—Blake-Anthony Johnson

The last concert of the season was my favorite because of the exceptional conductor, Gilbert Varga, and the programming. Varga was exacting, and his rehearsing was meticulous. In addition to Bartók's *Two Portraits*, Stravinsky's *Firebird*, and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 with Anna Vinnitskaya, the program included Roussel's *Bacchus and Ariadne* Suite No. 2, which I had never played before. Both



CSO/CCM Diversity Fellow Maurice Todd with his mentor, CSO Principal Bass Owen Lee

the Roussel and Stravinsky highlighted the beautiful, warm, and powerful sound of the CSO.

What's the one thing you would want the world to know about this program?

That it is a valuable experience for people who might otherwise have had a difficult time in the orchestra world—and that it has been a success so far.

Maurice Todd, double bass

Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, Maurice Todd holds bachelor's and master's degrees in double bass performance from CCM. He is currently a bassist in Kentucky's Lexington Philharmonic. He is a seven-time Aspen Fellowship recipient and previously won the Dayton Philharmonic Minority Fellowship and National Symphony Orchestra League Scholarship. At CCM, Todd has served as the graduate

assistant for the double bass studio under Albert Laszlo. His CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship mentor is CSO Principal Bass Owen Lee.

What has been the most valuable aspect of the program so far?

The most valuable aspect of being in the program so far has been the association of the CSO with the Sphinx Organization in Detroit, Michigan. I played in the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra and made many personal and professional connections. As a result of this association, I applied and was awarded an MPower Artist Grant through the Sphinx Organization to start the Cincinnati Double Bass Institute.

How has your playing improved over the season?

As a result of playing in the CSO bass section and having lessons with my mentor, Owen Lee, my chamber music skills have benefited greatly. I am more sensitive and more expressive than I was before entering the program.

What has your relationship with your CSO mentor been like?

I basically have three mentors in the CSO—Owen Lee, plus stand partners Matthew Zory and Rick Vizachero—all of whom have been very supportive and encouraging. Before entering the program I was a regular substitute with the CSO and would always sit last chair. The program allows me to sit higher up in the section with my mentors, which strengthens my relationships with them. I get feedback from them that I can apply immediately.

What has been a favorite memory or experience from the first year?

My best memory so far was playing Nielsen's Symphony No. 4. I played this piece with the CSO as a substitute, but playing it a second time with them was a truly educational experience. Assistant Principal Bass James Lambert, a seasoned member of the orchestra, brought the score to rehearsals and was checking a tricky entrance in movement four. This immediately told me that every conductor's interpretation is different, so you have to do your homework.

What's the one thing you would want the world to know about this program?

I would want people to know that this program is truly devoted to helping us get symphony jobs. They have given five people of color a chance to experience a professional orchestral setting where every member is approachable and willing to help.

Have there been any particular joys or challenges that stand out?

Being nestled in the section with the principal, assistant principal, associate principal, and section members—and being part of the sublime music making within the bass section—is one of my greatest joys of being in this program. **S**

Two Pioneering Diversity Studies from the League

As orchestras across the U.S. work to ensure that the field is inclusive and representative of the communities they serve, the League of American Orchestras recently published two landmark diversity studies. *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*, commissioned by the League with research and data analysis by Dr. James Doeser, reports on gender and ethnic/racial diversity in orchestras among musicians, conductors, staff, executives, and board members. *Forty Years of Fellowships: A Study of Orchestras' Efforts to Include African American and Latino Musicians*, commissioned by the League with research and analysis by Nick Rabkin and Monica Hairston O'Connell, is an in-depth examination of orchestras' past efforts to diversify their musician ranks with fellowships for African American and Latino musicians. The report presents program and impact data about diversity fellowships from 1976 to 2016, and explores the perspectives of fellowship program alumni. Both reports offer insights based on rigorous data and careful methodologies.

Visit www.americanorchestras.org/diversitystudies to download the studies for free.