

Delaware County Youth Orchestra

Est. 1973

Year in Review • 2003-2004 Season

www.dcyo.org

32nd Season

Box 143, Media, PA 19063

The 32nd season of the Delaware County Youth Orchestra was notable for the debut of new music director Thomas Hong. Mr. Hong proved to be a meticulous and engaging conductor, leading his exceptionally talented student musicians through a season of inspired performances.

Membership of the orchestra

During the 2003-2004 season the orchestra had 94 members. The previous spring, approximately 100 students auditioned for the orchestra to fill out the ranks of those who graduated or were unable to return. The large number of talented students participating in auditions over the past decade has permitted a very high degree of selectivity and maintained the high quality of the orchestra. DCYO members come from a wider geographic area than the name implies: for the 2003-2004 season, 47% came from Delaware County, 20% from Chester County, 20% from Montgomery County, 4% from Philadelphia, 4% from New Jersey, and 5% from Delaware. Approximately 88% of the members were high-school students, the majority of whom were juniors and seniors, and 12% were in middle school. Membership was evenly divided between male and female students.

Conductor and assistant conductor

Thomas Hong was named conductor and music director of the Delaware County Youth Orchestra at the beginning of the 2003-2004 season. Mr. Hong received an artist diploma in orchestral conducting from the Curtis Institute in 2002, where he studied with Otto-Werner Mueller under a Leopold Stokowski Fellowship. He is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Haverford College, where he conducts the Haverford/Bryn Mawr College Orchestra. For the past few summers, he has also been on the faculty of the Strings International Music Festival held during July at Bryn Mawr College.

Assisting Mr. Hong during the spring 2004 was Yoon Jae Lee, who worked with Mr. Hong in full-orchestra and sectional rehearsals and provided invaluable assistance at the May 2004 auditions. Mr. Lee received his Bachelor of Music degree in 2000 from

the Mannes College of Music in both piano and orchestral conducting and subsequently studied conducting at the University Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria for two years. He is currently pursuing his master's degree in orchestral conducting at Mannes, studying with David Hayes. Mr. Lee is principal conductor of the Manhattan Opera Theatre and Ensemble 212, a newly formed chamber orchestra he has founded. He will continue as assistant to Mr. Hong during the 2004-2005 season.

2003-2004 concerts

In his first year with DCYO Thomas Hong demonstrated meticulous preparation and abundance of energy as conductor and music director. Mr. Hong quickly won the respect and dedication of an exceptionally talented student orchestra. The result was a season of inspired performances.

DCYO played to a full house for the season's first concert on November 23 at Neumann College's Meagher Theatre. This concert featured Dvorak's festive *Carnival Overture* and Tchaikovsky's romantic *Symphony No. 2* ("Little Russian"). Also featured at this performance was Copland's orchestral suite *Appalachian Spring*. This challenging work, originally scheduled for the spring of 2003, gave testament to the depth of individual talents in this year's student orchestra. The fall concert program was repeated two weeks later at the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center and was enthusiastically received.

The major works presented for the spring 2004 concerts included Bartok's *Dance Suite* and the weightier Beethoven *Symphony No. 3* ("Eroica"). However, the overwhelming favorite by unofficial polling may well have been the Bernstein Overture to *Candide*, which served as the dazzling concert opener. This program was first presented on April 20 at Haverford High School and again on April 25 at Marple Newtown High School. Congratulations to all of the dedicated DCYO musicians under the direction of Thomas Hong.

Performance hours

Once each semester the orchestra sponsors a performance hour for soloists and small chamber groups drawn from the ranks of the orchestra. Since its inception in 1998, this program has grown quite rapidly, with orchestra members finding it wise to sign up to perform well in advance of the performance date in order to ensure a place on the program. DCYO performance hours have become popular venues for students to gain experience playing in front of an audience of parents, friends, and peers. Traditionally the performance hour has been held at Newtown Square Presbyterian Church. Due to an unexpected renovation project at the church, the December 2003 performance hour was moved to Bethlehem United Methodist Church in Thornton, PA. The beautiful sanctuary complimented the very talented DCYO musicians. The program was well attended and featured violin and cello solos, percussion solos on marimba and snare drum, a sister duet on violin and flute, and ended with a lilting acoustical guitar piece by Brouwer.

In the spring of 2004, the performance hour was once again on the move, this time held in the fellowship hall at Swarthmore Presbyterian Church. This venue proved to be perfect for DCYO's performance hour needs because of its convenient location, excellent Steinway piano, and pleasant performance space. The large audience had the privilege to hear excellent violin, cello and marimba solos and a mother/son duet on violin and cello. The penultimate ensemble was an award-winning string quartet playing the Allegro from Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*. The program ended with an outstanding woodwind quintet, joined by a guest pianist, performing Francis Poulenc's *Sextet for Piano and Wind Quintet*.

The quality of playing in both performance hours was excellent. The parents of DCYO members have asked that the performance hour be extended beyond an hour to accommodate all the musicians who would like to perform. The DCYO board is planning to add a third performance hour to the current 2004-2005 schedule.

Camp Tockwogh rehearsal weekend

Near the beginning of each season, DCYO schedules a weekend of intense rehearsals at Camp Tockwogh on the Chesapeake Bay. This annual mid-September retreat encourages camaraderie between new and returning members and provides a jump-start towards mastering the fall repertoire. For the September 2003 Camp Tockwogh Rehearsal Weekend, approximately 95% of DCYO new and returning

students were able to make the trip. The weekend retreat gave the new conductor an opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of what promised to be a remarkably talented group of musicians. Although the first morning rehearsal opened with a thunderous downpour, the skies soon brightened up to afford a beautiful weekend of activities. Students quickly warmed up to first-year conductor Thomas Hong, who demonstrated ceaseless energy at the podium as well as on the basketball and beach volleyball courts. By all accounts there was no shortage of available activities, which ranged from archery and rock-wall climbing to water sports on the bay shore. As always, the weekend was a great success, stimulating the orchestra to develop as an ensemble both musically and socially.

Sectional rehearsals

Once each semester, rehearsals are turned over to professional musicians who coach individual instrumental sections of the orchestra to give special attention to problems particular to each instrument. These sectionals markedly improve the quality of subsequent rehearsals and performances. During the 2003-2004 season, DCYO sectional coaches included former members of the Philadelphia Orchestra as well as musicians who are faculty members of surrounding area universities and freelance soloists and conductors. (Because the regular Tuesday evening subscription-series for the Philadelphia Orchestra falls on the same evening that DCYO rehearses, DCYO is unable to use current Philadelphia Orchestra members to coach sectional rehearsals.)

During the fall sectional, the new DCYO conductor, Thomas Hong, organized the rehearsal with an opportunity for the entire orchestra to be exposed to the expertise of all the coaches. The first hour of rehearsal the coaches worked with each section privately. During the second hour, the orchestra met as a whole, with Mr. Hong conducting. The coaches sat in each section and played along with the orchestra, adding another dimension in learning for these young musicians.

Of special note during the 2003-2004 season is the return of Sidney Curtiss to coach the fall and spring viola sectionals. Mr. Curtiss retired in 2002 from his position as Assistant Principal Viola of the Philadelphia Orchestra, having held that position for over a decade and having been a member of the orchestra for more than forty years. He currently serves on the faculty of both Settlement Music School and Temple University.

Distinguished members

During the 2003-2004 season, DCYO members achieved significant musical honors. Although only about one-half of the orchestra members opt to take part in district, regional, and state orchestra and band festivals, eighteen DCYO members won seats in 2004 All-State Honors Orchestra and Band --thirteen members in PMEA All-State Orchestra, one member in PMEA All-State Band, and one member in PMEA All-State Wind Ensemble. In addition, three members from the state of Delaware won seats in Delaware's All-State Orchestra, and two of those three also won seats in Delaware's All-State Band.

This past season DCYO members shone in concerto competitions. Two members distinguished themselves as finalists in the Philadelphia Orchestra Greenfield Student Competition. Five members were 2003-2004 concerto competition winners, and one of these five members won a total of five concerto competitions during the course of the season. DCYO members won competitions sponsored by the Ambler Symphony Orchestra, the Bucks County Symphony, the Greater Philadelphia Honors Orchestra, the Hershey Symphony, the Lansdowne Symphony, Musica 2000, the Old York Road Symphony, the Philadelphia Harp Society, and the Wilmington Community Orchestra. Three DCYO students were winners in the solo divisions of the Tri-County Concerts Youth Festival, and a DCYO string quartet was a winner in the senior ensemble division. A DCYO member won first place in the Eastern Division of the Music Teachers National Association Composition Competition for his string quartet, and won third place in the National Division. One DCYO member will be performing on NPR's "From the Top" in fall 2004, joining the ranks of three other DCYOs who have appeared on that program since 2001. Several DCYO members have been accepted into highly selective summer music programs such as the Aspen Music Festival and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

DCYO June 2004 graduates include at least three National Merit Scholarship Finalists and two National Merit Commended Students. Many June graduates received significant scholarships for the institutions they will be attending. DCYO members going on to major in music will be attending such schools as New England Conservatory, Peabody Conservatory, Princeton University, Temple University Esther Boyer College of Music, and West Chester University School of Music. For further information, please see the attached lists of "DCYO Distinguished Members, 2003-2004," and "DCYO June 2004 Graduates."

Delaware Valley Young Musicians' Orchestra

The Delaware Valley Young Musicians' Orchestra (YMO) was established in 1989 as a less advanced version of the Delaware County Youth Orchestra. It provides an orchestra experience for talented young musicians who do not have a school orchestra or who need to be challenged at a high school level. Each year several players advance to the Delaware County Youth Orchestra. The orchestra manager is Barbara Ostroff, a violist in the Delaware County Symphony, string teacher at Holy Child Academy, and DCYO board member (as the founder of the Young Musicians' Orchestra). The YMO is a full orchestra with harp, strings, percussion, and wind sections. In the 2003-2004 season there were 85 players, with the average grade of 8.7. The orchestra has two conductors: A. Scott Kiehner, who teaches instrumental band music in the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District, and David Reif, who teaches music in the Radnor School District and conducts the Chester County Concert Band. The YMO rehearses on Thursday evenings in the band room at Springton Lake Middle School and performs two concerts a year. During the 2003-2004 season, the fall concert was at Valley Forge Middle School and the spring concert was at Neumann College. Auditions for new players are held each year on the first Saturday in June.

A look ahead to the 2004-2005 concert season

In his second season, conductor and music director Thomas Hong will again be frequently assisted by Yoon Jae Lee, with whom he very successfully collaborated this past year. The coming season will showcase a wealth of talented young musicians and programs featuring a guest chorus as well as a solo violinist.

The fall repertoire will feature Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5* and Verdi's Overture to *La Forza del Destino*. The program on December 3 will include the Upper Darby Concert Choir for two holiday works by Gustav Holst and Franz Joseph Haydn. The second fall program on December 12 will feature Philadelphia Orchestra Principal Second Violinist Kimberly Fisher as soloist in two works by Camille Saint-Saëns.

The spring concerts will include Ravel's orchestration of Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. This program will be presented on April 17 at Neumann College and again on May 1 at Conestoga High School.