

## Preview

### **Cleveland Orchestra's MLK Celebration to feature Sphinx competition winner Adé Williams**

by Mike Telin



On Sunday, January 20, 2013, at 7:00 pm, The Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Tito Muñoz, will perform its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual concert in celebration of the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., a tradition that began even before Dr. King's birthday became a national holiday.

The concert will include the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Chorus (a 125-member volunteer chorus from the greater Cleveland community) and the Central State University Chorus, both prepared by William Henry Caldwell, and will feature Sphinx Competition prizewinner Adé Williams as violin soloist. All available tickets have already been distributed, but listeners can tune into a live broadcast on WCLV (104.9 FM) and WCPN (90.3 FM) or on the stations' live Internet streams.

Since its founding in 1996 by Aaron Dworkin, the [Sphinx Organization](#) has worked to overcome the cultural stereotype of classical music, and to encourage the participation of Blacks and Latinos in the field. Today the organization cites some impressive facts about how their work is impacting classical music. For example, prior to Sphinx, solo performances by musicians of color were rare; now there are 20-30 per year. Never in history had a Black and Latino orchestra toured; now a tour occurs every year. Prior to Sphinx there were relatively few commissions by composers of color; now that number is increasing annually. Sphinx also established the first intensive summer training program for Black and Latino string players.

The annual Sphinx Competition is open to all Junior High, High School, and College age Black and Latino string players residing in the U.S. The 2012 Junior Division First Place Laureate, Adé Williams, is also the first William Warfield scholarship recipient and a member of the Music Institute of Chicago's (MIC) Academy program where she is a student of Almita and Roland Vamos. The 14 year-old Ms. Williams has already earned honors at numerous competitions including the DePaul Concerto Festival for Young Performers, Sejong Cultural Society's Music Competition and the Walgreen's National Concerto Competition.

Named Artist-in-Residence with the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra in 2012, Ms.

Williams made her orchestral debut at the age of six was with the Chicago Sinfonietta. We reached the very engaging Adé Williams by telephone at her home in Chicago and began by getting her thoughts on making her Cleveland Orchestra debut.

*Mike Telin: You'll be playing the first Movement ("Allegro") from Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 4. This must be exciting, although you're certainly no stranger to performing with orchestra.*

Adé Williams: No, [Laughing] but not orchestras like The Cleveland Orchestra. They are like — oh my goodness — it's a whole other level than what I have done before.

*MT: Why this particular Mozart concerto?*

AW: I gave them my repertoire list and they actually picked the piece. It's also the piece that I won Sphinx with.

*MT: It's a great piece, but what do you like about it?*

AW: I like it because it is so bright. People think of Mozart as being light and fluffy, but this concerto is so triumphant. And with Mozart you can do so much.

*MT: But for the performer it is not easy, as you know. When Mozart is played well it does sound easy, but it is quite difficult.*

AW: Yes, there is no room for error. Everyone will know if you make a mistake.

*MT: How has winning the Sphinx competition advanced your career? Obviously winning it is why you will be on the stage of Severance Hall, but have other performance opportunities come along as well?*

AW: So many, from The Cleveland Orchestra to small youth orchestras all over the country. Also a lot of private events and I've gotten so many opportunities because of those events. It's just opened so many doors for performances, which is what I love doing. So it has been a great experience.

*MT: But all of a sudden you are now a spokesperson for teenagers as well.*

AW: It's not anything I feel pressure from, but when I go to different schools to do outreach, and I'm talking about classical music, that is something I have had to get used to because it is so weird for me to be their same age and yet I'm on stage teaching them something. But I have had a lot of good responses so I do get more comfortable every time that I do it. They told me that I will be doing outreach for 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders for another orchestra event and I thought, that is right up my alley.

*MT: Why do you think it's right up your alley? Do you enjoy talking to your peers?*

AW: I feel like I can relate to them so much more because they are so close to my age and we're going through the same things. I'm not in the same high school program and

they're not performing all over the country, but yet we do have so much in common and it's cool that we get to share that with each other. I like performing for adult audiences which is what I normally do, but when I get to do outreach with my own age group it's a whole different thing. It's so much easier to relate.

*MT: I'm so happy for you to get to have all of these opportunities.*

AW: Thank you so much!

*MT: Your teachers, Almita and Roland Vamos — I don't need to tell you that they have an impressive list of students.*

AW: They are amazing people. Besides being two of the best teachers in the world, they are probably the most generous people I have ever met. They'll do anything for you, drive you here and there, give you shoes and cupcakes. They are kind of like grandparents in a way but then again they are amazing teachers. Even if you don't sound good at all, they still find some way to inspire you during your lessons. You always come out feeling good about your playing even when you know you didn't sound your best.

*MT: When you do have a lesson that did not go so well, are you a person who goes home and starts practicing right away, or are you the kind that goes for a walk and tries to shake off all the wrong notes?*

AW: Oh no, definitely the first. As soon as I get back I'm like, I have so much to practice, so much to learn.

*MT: When did you start playing the violin?*

AW: When I was three, so it's been about twelve years.

*MT: Did you begin with the Suzuki program?*

AW: Yes, I studied at the Hyde Park Suzuki Institute for four years, and then I studied with Rachel-Barton Pine. She gave me so much that I will never be able to re-pay her. She put me with the Vamos's assistant Marko Dreher, and now I have been studying with Almita and Roland Vamos for about five years. I have had so much support. I could not have done any of this without all of them.

*MT: How do you spend your time when you're not playing the violin?*

AW: [Laughing] That's a great question. Well school work and I love to dance. I studied ballet for six years and I had just gotten to my point shoes. I had to stop because music has taken over. But I still love to dance and act, and I swim.

*MT: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk. It has been a pleasure, and have fun with the performance.*

AW: Oh, Thank you.

To watch a video about the Sphinx Story, [click here](#).

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