

THE BICENTENNIAL ISSUE

CLASSICAL MUSIC INDY

NOTE

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The Bicentennial Issue

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Americans have sequestered at home during the COVID-19 epidemic, but we have manifold ways to work, connect and entertain ourselves. Our 1918 ancestors weren't so lucky during the Spanish flu pandemic. Movie theatres were one of their few modes of escape, and judging from an ad in the *Indianapolis Star*, attendance was down. Indianapolis theatres made a shocking effort to tout their safety and even urged audiences to try “the laugh cure.”

“Cheer up,” read a headline in an ad for a dozen local theatres. “Theatres Are Open. You can safely attend the following theatres. They are properly ventilated and constantly maintained in perfect sanitary condition.” The fine print is less enthusiastic. “Flu Masks Must Be Donned on Entering the Theatre and Worn Continuously During the Performance by Order of the Board of Public Health.”

Source: *Indianapolis Star*, November 1918

Access more Indianapolis music history in the free digital version of NOTE beginning October 1. More info at www.classicalmusicindy.org

A ONE- WOMAN DYNAMO

ONA B. TALBOT'S PATIENT CULTIVATION OF
INDY'S CLASSICAL MUSIC AUDIENCE.

by Crystal Hammon



Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, Gift of Mrs. Wallace Richards, 60.2 © Wayman Adams

Swimming against the tide of jazz, blues and ragtime that permeated Indianapolis during the late 19th and early 20th century was the audacious Ona B. Talbot, a whirling dervish who imported the world's greatest soloists, ballets and orchestras through a subscription concert series that bore her name. Her work was one of the major turning points in the city's classical music history.

Talbot was raised in a family that appreciated music. The family's friends included Franz Xavier Arens, conductor of the Indianapolis May Musical Festival from 1892 to 1896. He was president of the Metropolitan School of Music in Indianapolis and worked to develop Indy's classical music scene.

Arens moved to New York in 1897. His most lasting influence on Indy may have been the inspiration he gave Talbot. Thereafter, she dedicated her life to promoting classical music in Indianapolis as well as Louisville, Chicago, Philadelphia and smaller cities scattered across the Midwest. Before starting her series, Talbot had been involved in an attempt to build a symphony in 1898. By 1905, that effort sputtered and died. She was well aware of the arduous task before her when she started the Ona B. Talbot Concert Series with regional soloists in the 280-seat Das Deutsche House.

Talbot quickly upped her game with blockbuster stars such as Madame Schumann Heink and Irish tenor John McCormack. Anyone who could afford a \$1 seat could hear live performances of the Philharmonic Orchestra of New York, the

Metropolitan Opera or the Italian Orchestra. Talbot also brought ballets such as Ballet Russe, and renowned artists such as Serge Rachmaninoff and American soprano Geraldine Farrar.

Talbot's success in importing classical musicians — and the public's ability to engage in cultural tourism in nearby cities like Cincinnati, where classical music

had taken root — was supported by the growing railroad system, according to James Briscoe, Ph.D., professor emeritus of historical musicology at Butler University.

At the start of World War I, some speculated that economic strife and the diversion of global musicians who were pressed into military service might diminish classical music subscriptions throughout the United States. Talbot joined a choir of optimistic American arts leaders when she shared this opinion in the August 22, 1914 issue of *Musical America*:



Franz X. Arens, Vocalist
Used with permission from the
Indiana Historical Society

"...Since music is the universal language, greater audiences than ever before will gather under these conditions, to hear the finer thoughts as they are expressed by the great composers. The time was when we could live without it. Today, it is a necessity." ■

Classical Music Indy gratefully acknowledges the following sources for this story: James Briscoe, Ph.D., Charles Conrad, Ph.D., Nicholas Johnson, Ph.D., Sheridan Stormes, The Indiana Historical Society, The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, The Insider's Guide to Indianapolis and several historical periodicals, books and newspaper articles.



32nd National Sangerfest, Indianapolis, Indiana, June 17, 1908, Bretzman Collection, Indiana Historical Society



MUSIC OF THE ELDERS

RECLAIMING INDY'S NATIVE MUSIC.

by Crystal Hammon

A group of Potawatomi Indians gathered next to the Wabash River. This piece exemplifies Winter's reputation as an artist. Bequest of Judge Paul H. Buchanan, Jr., George Winter (American, born English, 1810–1876), *Scene on the Wabash*, about 1848

European settlers officially claimed Indianapolis in 1820 and named it by combining Indiana — land of Indians (as Native Americans were known at the time) — with “polis,” the Greek word for city. Indy’s first people may have their name buried in ours, but we rarely acknowledge the dozen or so tribes that hunted, farmed and made homes here before the French explorer Robert de La Salle began wandering the territory in 1679.

Native Americans were gradually driven out of central Indiana by a series of treaties, starting with the Delaware tribe in 1818. That was followed by removal of the Potawatomi in 1838 and the Miami in 1846. By the middle of the 19th century, all but a few Native Americans — mostly the Miami tribe — had been sent to live in other places.

As tribes scattered, their language, music and culture disintegrated, according to Scott Shoemaker, Ph.D., a member of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and curator of Native American art, history and culture at the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis. “Music is a central part of who we are as people,” says Shoemaker, whose family received removal exemptions in 1846.

Some of his ancestors lived on reserved land in Indiana’s Grant, Wabash and Miami counties until the turn of the 20th century. Others moved to Kansas and Oklahoma. “The fragmentation of our people had a huge impact on our music in terms of how it was part of our daily lives,” Shoemaker says. The last of the Miami tribe’s fluent speakers died

in the 1960s, leaving behind little direct knowledge of the language or the songs that were native to Miami culture.

A few things survived to help reclaim it. “When I was growing up, there was an elder who remembered a lullaby that her mom sang to her, and another elder who remembered a song that her mom created to help her not be afraid when she was sent to get wood from the wood pile,” he says.

Shoemaker recalls Eugene Brown, a respected elder who made Native American flutes. “He created beautiful flutes that had a lot of narrative carved into them,” Shoemaker says. “He was always giving them as gifts to people. When I think of a native elder, he’s the person that I strive to be. He used music to be a really generous person.”

The Miami tribe began revitalizing their language in the early 1990s, guided in part by 300-year-old Jesuit sources that documented language up to the last fluent speakers. Those discoveries stimulated new songs and innovation in tribal culture. Families educated themselves about their ancestors at community camps that sprung up around that time.

Strong relationships between the Miami and the Potawatomi also helped rebuild culture in ways that seem relevant to contemporary Native Americans. The two tribes have always been intricately tied to one another and often met to share songs and social dances. Artist George Winter lived among the Miami and Potawatomi in the 1830s in northern Indiana, and his drawings illustrate their historical kinship. “The culture in the present is just as authentic as it was in the past,” Shoemaker says. “It’s just changed and different.”

Hundreds of people from different tribes gather each year in Oklahoma for social stomp dances. “Song, music and dance were always part of social gatherings, and we’re working to actively finding ways to reintroduce that back into our community lives,” he says. “You’ll hear songs in many different languages at these dances.” ■



The Micro Composition Project

MEET THE LOCAL COMPOSERS CREATING
DYNAMIC NEW WORKS COMMISSIONED BY
CLASSICAL MUSIC INDY

by Crystal Hammon

Mozart had his Baron Gottfried van Swieten, and Joseph Haydn had his Esterházy family. All the best-known classical composers wrote music for the ages thanks to a patronage system that's long gone. Who, then, do today's composers have as their sponsors?

In Indianapolis, organizations such as Classical Music Indy incubate their work. Already known for 24/7 streaming music, producing podcasts, and creating fresh, relevant content for today's listeners, Classical Music Indy also fosters new music by commissioning works of the highest artistic quality, composed by local musicians.

To that end, Classical Music Indy recently selected six local musicians to compose music for the Micro Composition Project, dubbed "micro" because each piece lasts five minutes or less. Each composition will be premiered by Forward Motion, a local ensemble known for its dedication to new music. That performance will happen later this fall through Classical Music Indy's collaboration with the city's newest music festival, Music in Bloom.

"Our collaboration with Classical Music Indy and Forward Motion is of the utmost significance for us because they help ground the Music in Bloom Festival in Indianapolis and show our continued support of Indiana composers and musicians," says Clare Longendyke, founder and artistic director of Music in Bloom.

Forward Motion will also record each piece, giving the music an enduring quality. For many reasons, new classical music recordings aren't typically aired in traditional radio broadcasts. Classical Music Indy is in a unique position to leverage its streaming assets to help composers share their work and gain a larger, national audience, according to Jenny Burch, CEO of Classical Music Indy.

"The recordings also help grow our Peck Classical Music Library, which is becoming more representative of women composers and composers of color," Burch says. "The 2020 Micro Composition Project composers very much fit with that vision. Plus we'll be able to distribute these original works over our streaming service. That's the platform where we can create the greatest awareness for these local artists."

On the following pages, meet the composers who'll be writing music for the 2020 Micro Composition Project, made possible by the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation. ■

For virtual concert dates and more information, follow the Music in Bloom Festival on Facebook.



Photo by Laudig Creations

Gabrielle Cerberville

Gabrielle Cerberville graduated from Butler University with a bachelor's degree in music composition and theory, and has premiered her music in the U.S. and Europe. Her scores are curiously like visual art, imbued by color, texture and implied musical shapes. Is it music or art? The answer: yes. Her micro composition for CMI is emblematic of her exotic creativity, doubling as a board game.

"The most important part of my process is invention. I think the most beloved classical composers of the past would probably have said the same thing. When we are experimenting and we are fascinated with new ideas, we give ourselves permission to push things forward. If nobody is doing that, and everybody is afraid that what they write won't be accepted because it's not like the old stuff, then classical music dies."

"When people look at my graphic scores, they want to know what it sounds like in my head. I keep that pretty close to the chest."

"I don't like to insert myself into my work. That may sound like an odd thing to hear a composer say, but I really view myself as an equitable deist. I'm going to start the process of composition. I'm going to make a really cool template for you to play with. And then I'm going to walk away and see what you do with it. I see myself as creating opportunities for others to be creative." ■



Rob Funkhouser

Rob Funkhouser's music has been performed by well-known groups like the Los Angeles Percussion Quartet — great exposure for a composer who wants to continue doing what he loves. As an artist, Funkhouser views his CMI commission as proof that New York, Los Angeles and Chicago no longer hold the franchise on creativity, proof that maybe — just maybe — the linear model of mapping a career as a composer through pedigrees and institutions may be getting a long-awaited update.

"My vision for the future of music and art is to celebrate what's happening locally as an important thing. It enriches the culture of the city, and it makes the city a place that people want to be and have pride in without a comparative mentality. I don't want our major achievements to be playing the music that was hip in New York two years ago."

"I would love for someone to come visit Indianapolis, catch a concert and hear a bunch of things they've never heard before. It shouldn't feel like a one-time experiment. It should feel like this is just what we do here, like we have a community, and we're playing music by people in that community, and we are building a musical identity for ourselves rather than having it handed to us."

"I think the advantage of doing these short compositions is the opportunity to show six different musical voices from around the city. There's a better shot that the audience will like something, find it meaningful and want to hear the next thing we do." ■

Timothy Gondola

With a father who adored classical music and a mother who led and accompanied gospel choirs, Timothy Gondola grew up in conditions that favored his evolution as an accomplished classical pianist. The Indianapolis musician began playing at the age of five, but his brush with jazz didn't happen until he went away to study geography and music at Macalester College. It was a shocking discovery that set him on a path toward an even higher level of musicianship, leading toward his ultimate goal: the ability to play and compose with complete artistic freedom, merging jazz improvisation techniques with classical training.

"Apart from music, I've been growing in appreciation for this city and for our history. Music is my passion, and to start to find my place in the music of Indiana is really special to me. The feeling of contributing and creating here at home for Hoosiers and for people around the world feels like I'm settling more into Indiana as my home state."

"As a relative newcomer in the composition world, I feel like the micro composition format suits me. My style of music is exploratory. I like to focus on one musical idea and dive into all the ways I can change it while maintaining a constant idea that runs through the whole piece. That doesn't necessarily lend itself to a long format. It feels appropriate to a three- to five-minute composition for a small chamber group."

"All music is contemporary when it's made. Classical composers of the past didn't feel ancient when they wrote. They were making music that they were feeling in that moment. All musicians and composers throughout time share that perspective. I'm creating the music that I hear and feel." ■



Photo by Aaron Dixon



Mina Keohane

Mina Keohane arrived in Indianapolis after graduating from Boston's Berklee College of Music with a degree in jazz composition. Drawn here by a romantic interest, the Fort Walton, Florida native quickly made friends and decided to stay because of the city's creative network. By day, she writes television and radio scores for an Indianapolis commercial recording studio. On her own time, she composes music for her band Mina and the Wondrous Flying Machine and performs with other local musicians.

"I'm not a classical composer, so when I received this commission, I wondered if I should make it sound like a classical piece. I admire the kind of new music and sound exploration local composers like Rob Funkhouser are doing. I thought maybe I should make something more like that. And then I thought, 'No, I should just write what I want to write and be as honest as possible.' The thing that would shoot me in the foot would be trying to make it sound like something that's not me."

"Music is magical. You're creating sound where there was none. And you can be completely enamored by it. There's magic there. When you watch babies listen to music, they start to bob to the music without knowing. Something in them is responding to rhythm, a beat, a sound, and it happens in every culture. Of course, I like getting paid, but the reason I write, sing and play is because it's super fun and super enthralling. It can make sense of things, or make no sense at all." ■



Eric Salazar

Eric Salazar, also known as "The Clarinet Guy," has a dynamic relationship with the city's new classical music scene. Salazar is a composer, Director of Community Engagement at Classical Music Indy, and his ensemble, Forward Motion, will play and record the compositions spawned by the Micro Composition Project — his own plus those works composed by the remaining five artists. Listening carefully to

the diverse community of local composers, Salazar helped uncover a harsh reality: most emerging composers lack the financial resources to get their works played and recorded.

"The great thing about this for my career, and for all the composers involved, is that we've been given a platform to put as much time, energy and respect into creating our new piece of music without the distraction of finding an audience or focusing on the entrepreneurial side of things."

"These artists are our cultural ambassadors, creating music from our local culture. I really like the recording aspect of this project because it allows us to showcase local culture on a national scale. It's important to export and import cultural ideas among different cities because we learn from each other and come together with an understanding of our shared human identity." ■

Nicholas Sokol

Nicholas Sokol is the kind of artist who is willing to demolish his own work just to achieve an artistic ideal. The Indianapolis composer, conductor and pianist originally meant to divide his studies at Butler University between pre-med and piano performance. During his sophomore year, Sokol realized that music fascinated him much more than science. From then on, Sokol poured everything he had into learning his craft. After completing his undergraduate in piano, music composition and conducting at Butler, he followed up with a master's degree in music composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music in 2019.

"It's important to have ensembles that are willing to play new music. It offers an extraordinary opportunity for innovation,

draws different crowds and gives a different perspective to the audience. We need to consider what it [new classical music] can do and how it's different than works by Mozart, Brahms and Beethoven. They're all great, but I think it's important to have artists who speak for their own time. Artists absorb what's going on around them, and it ends up, directly or indirectly, in their music."



"Composers have the ability to highlight certain issues within society. We can bring light to climate change, mental health and other issues that are very prevalent in our time. We can choose to make a statement. I think it's very important for people to be exposed to that." ■