



Danny and the Duke

In the spring of 1969 Duke Ellington was a music legend - composer, performer, visionary and as Wikipedia points out, founder and leader of the best known orchestral unit in the history of jazz. In the spring of 1969 Danny Scher was a junior at Palo Alto High School and

a percussionist with the California Youth Symphony. The story of how these two came together to create a bit of CYS history is both fascinating and inspiring. We thank Danny for taking the time to speak with us.

Danny Scher has been a friend of CYS, and a loyal contributor, for many years. Although we knew of Danny's early involvement in memorable CYS collaborations, as well as his illustrious career as a top executive with the Bill Graham Presents organization, it was only recently that the full saga of Duke Ellington's historic collaboration with CYS in March 1969 at Foothill College became known to us. Last month a number of our CYS friends noticed that California Youth Symphony had been cited in the *New York Times* in an article about a Palo Alto teenager who got jazz giant Thelonius Monk to come to his high school for a concert. Danny, an avid jazz fan and showing considerable, shall we call it "nerve", got in touch with Monk and talked him into coming to Palo Alto High for a concert. The fall 1968 gig is in the news now because Danny's recording of that concert has finally been approved by the Monk estate for release. This has created an international stir since this is the first "new" Monk material to appear in over 15 years. Hence the article in the *NY Times*.

But back to 1968. Buoyed by his unlikely success with Monk, Danny decided to shoot even higher. At the time, CYS was raising funds for an upcoming tour to Australia and Danny thought that putting together a benefit concert with a superstar would be just the ticket to help with that project. He read in the paper that Duke Ellington would be performing in San Francisco. Danny had no idea how to get in touch with him. He decided to head to San Francisco. Since he was still too young to have a drivers license, he took the train. Strictly on guesswork Danny headed for one of the only hotels in town that he was aware of - the Fairmont. Danny walked from the train station to the hotel lobby, where he picked up the house phone and asked to speak with Duke Ellington. Perhaps Danny was too young to be shocked to find himself speaking with the Duke a minute later. Danny explained to Ellington that he performed with the California Youth Symphony, who were trying to raise funds for a tour to Australia. He had brought some CYS recordings for Duke to listen to in the hope that he would agree to perform with the symphony. Duke said "come on up". Danny tells us that his encounter with Duke at that point lasted about a minute. He handed Duke the LPs, Duke said thanks and closed the door.

Six months passed with no word from Duke. Danny noticed that Duke was returning to San Francisco for more gigs. Danny decided to head to San Francisco again. What had been nerve before was now determination. This time the trip was a bit easier - Danny had gotten his drivers license and drove up to the Fairmont. Once again he got Duke on the house phone and Duke said "come on up".

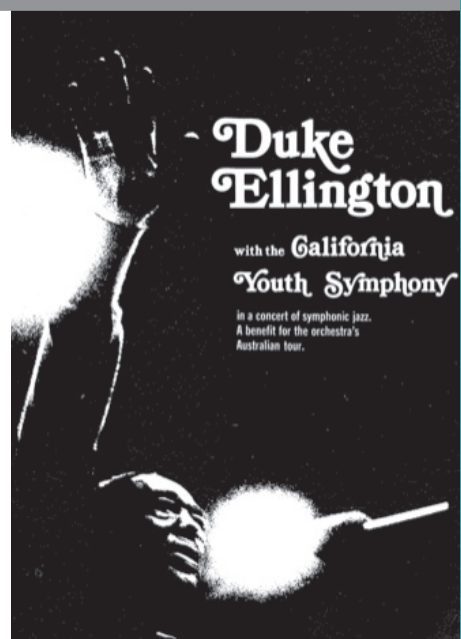
Duke told Danny that he was very impressed with the CYS recordings and that he would love to do a concert with the orchestra.

With this most difficult, and magical, agreement in hand, Danny mulled over the fact that he hadn't mentioned anything to anyone in CYS about his improbable quest to land the Duke - least of all CYS founder and conductor, Aaron Sten. Maestro Sten had a reputation for being a bit of a stern taskmaster. Not everyone in the orchestra would feel comfortable approaching him, especially about asking him to agree to a special concert. But fortunately Sten, certainly aware of Ellington's stature, readily agreed.

The concert on March 9, 1969 in the gym at Foothill College was a huge success. So was the tour to Australia the following June. Danny mentioned to us that he has a recording of this historic concert. Alas, he's been told that the Ellington estate would not agree to its release.

Danny was most kind in taking time to share many stories with us about his days in CYS, his early years as a concert promoter while pursuing his BA and MBA at Stanford, and his incredibly fascinating adventures while with Bill Graham Presents. One tidbit - Danny was responsible for the now historic collaboration between the San Francisco Symphony and Metallica. Danny's autobiography would be a fascinating read for anyone interested in the Bay Area or music in general. We hope that he writes it some day. We asked Danny if he had any words of advice to share with the younger generation. He said "follow your passion" and "use common sense". He said that he had three things that he requested of his kids as they became adults - be honest, be self-sufficient, and have a sense of humor.

Well said! Thanks again, Danny.



THE CALIFORNIA YOUTH SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION presents

Duke Ellington
with the California Youth Symphony

AARON STEN, Conductor
Sunday, March 9, 1969, 8:00 p.m. Foothill Gym

CAPRICCIO ESPAGNOL *Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov*
Alberada Variations
Alberada
Serenade in G major
Fandango asturiano

DUKE ELLINGTON CLASSICS
THE MOOCH
MOOD INDIGO
SOPHISTICATED LADY
SOLITUDE
TIMON OF ATHENS (ALCIBIADES)
(The above mentioned arrangements by Ellington were recorded at RCA Victor through the courtesy of Arthur Healey and the Boston Philharmonic)

THE GOLDEN BROOM AND THE GREEN APPLE
Narrated, played, and conducted by Duke Ellington

INTERMISSION

FANTASY ON JAPANESE WOOD PRINTS *Alan Hovhaness*
Xylophone Soloist - KAROL DAVIS

DUKE ELLINGTON CLASSICS
TAKE THE "A" TRAIN
THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE
PIANO MEDLEY
SATIN DOLL

National Merit Honorees

CYS musicians excel academically as well as musically. We would like to congratulate the following CYS musicians who have been selected as Semi-Finalists by the National Merit Scholarship Program. Only 0.5% of high school seniors achieve this recognition.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Melody Gawon Choi | Victoria Lam | Ji Won (Jade) Son | Michael Zhao |
| Tiffany Hwang | Rebecca Ma | Julia Wang | |

CYS Concert Sunday, December 20th

Please join us online at vimeo.com December 20 at 2:30pm for our hour-long concert featuring all seven of our orchestras and emsembles.

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LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

CALIFORNIA YOUTH SYMPHONY

441 CALIFORNIA AVENUE #5
PALO ALTO, CA 94306

PH. 650 325 6666

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

WWW.CYS.ORG



California Youth Symphony

QUARTERNOTES

JIM HOGAN, EDITOR

NOV / 2020

A New Way of Making Music

As all of us are painfully aware, the current pandemic has changed many facets of our lives. One of the areas suffering the greatest impact has been performing music in a group setting - exactly what young musicians have been doing with the California Youth Symphony for almost 70 years. When the pandemic restrictions were first put in place last spring our music team was able to shift to online formats. Even though the adjustments had to happen quickly, all of our ensembles were able to continue in some fashion. The orchestras (Senior Orchestra, Associate Orchestra and Wind Symphony) were able to produce concert videos, with each musician recording their own video from home to "guide tracks". Our music team, along with some expert technical help, then combined the dozens of individual videos into complete concert pieces. Although it was an exacting and time consuming process, the results were quite amazing.

Nonetheless, it soon became apparent that virtual rehearsing

and performing would need to be the format for the remainder of the calendar year and perhaps beyond. Over the summer CYS Music Director Leo Eylar enlisted CYS Wind Symphony Director Pete Nowlen to develop an innovative format for music instruction, ensemble rehearsing, and eventual virtual performances for each of our seven ensembles. Pete was uniquely qualified to take

on this task. He has a 30 year history with CYS, he's an internationally recognized performer, conductor and educator, and most crucially, he had already gained valuable experience in developing online platforms in his role as music director of the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band. Pete began to work with the rest of our music staff - Kati Kyme, Rosita Amador and Artie Storch - to lay out plans for seating auditions, rehearsals, sectionals,

and eventual video and audio performances, all of which had to be adapted to the new reality.

Pete also expanded our team to include Ryan Murray, Artistic Director of Music in the Mountains, Christina Mok, who is assisting with our orchestra string sections, and Leone Rivers, a recent music

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A New Way of Making Music

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graduate of UC Davis who had assisted Pete on a number of prior projects. We'll also be hiring a number of technical experts to assist in the production of concert material.

The challenge in front of them - the same one facing performing groups around the world - was how to rehearse and perform while the conductor and each player were in different locations. Complicating the situation was the fact that there would be an unavoidable latency (time lag) between performers connecting via the internet. Needless to say, playing precisely in rhythm is the goal of any ensemble and this is not possible with video connections on the internet. Fortunately CYS Board President Dave Morley, a performing musician himself, had a musical colleague who had developed an innovative tool for online practice and recording, which he generously made available to CYS. This tool, dubbed as the "TrackWrangler", combined with the Zoom platform that so many of us have become familiar with, has allowed for full rehearsals and sectionals to proceed smoothly this fall.

Of course CYS — again, like almost all performing groups — will not be presenting live concerts in the foreseeable future. However, our loyal audiences will be rewarded with an online CYS concert on December 20 at 2:30 pm. The concert will feature each of our seven ensembles in video selections of the music they have been working on this fall. The hour long concert will be streamed on the Vimeo platform, allowing for high resolution audio and video. Please keep an eye on our website - www.cys.org - for updates.



Pete Nowlen

CYS is extraordinarily fortunate to have Pete Nowlen to help us plan and direct our new, socially distanced program. Pete has been a vital member of our CYS team for 30 years, serving over the decades as brass coach, assistant conductor, summer camp director. Most recently Pete took on the role of directing our newest ensemble, the CYS Wind Symphony. He is one of northern California's busiest musicians. He's been a member of the UC Davis faculty since 1988 and currently serves as Director of Concert Bands. He also holds artistic director posts with the Camerata California Chamber Choir, the Rancho Cordova Civic Light Orchestra, and the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band. His orchestral conducting credits include the Sacramento Symphony, U.C. Davis Symphony Orchestra, Sacramento State University Symphony Orchestra, Camellia Symphony, and Music in the Mountains Orchestra as well as numerous opera, ballet and theater conducting credits. An outstanding French hornist, his performance credits include the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet orchestras, Symphony Silicon Valley, Sacramento Symphony, Philharmonic and Opera, the Music in the Mountains Festival, and the International Orchestra of Italy. In 1992, Pete was the third prize winner of the International Competition for Solo Horn of the Castle of Duino, Italy, and in 1994 was a semi-finalist in the prestigious American Horn Competition. Pete is the founder and driving force behind Sacramento's VITA Academy, dedicated to revitalizing classical music through innovative community and audience engagement and school music programs.

...And Pete Reports

We spoke with Pete recently about how things were going in the new world of CYS virtual music. Pete told us "Every group is doing something really fun. Lots of great things are happening. There's some really, really solid playing going on. I'm just so heartened by the quality of the first recordings that the musicians have done". Pete mentioned that he's particularly excited about the online "virtual" concert that CYS will present on the Vimeo format on December 20 at 2:30 pm. The hour long concert will feature all seven of our orchestras and ensembles. Pete shared these exciting features of the upcoming concert. Rosita Amador's Wind Prep ensembles will focus on some fun Holiday pieces. Kati Kyme's String Prep ensembles will offer music from Dvorak's *American Quartet* and other works. Our three orchestras — the CYS Senior Orchestra, the CYS Associate Orchestra, and the CYS Wind Symphony — will all offer music that originated in the media. The Wind Symphony will present the *Studio Ghibli Anime March*, the Associate Orchestra will present music from the Disneyesque video game *Kingdom Hearts*. The Senior Orchestra will offer music from the classic film *Back to the Future*. Capping the entire presentation will be a monumental collaboration with the Music in the Mountains Chorus, under the direction of Ryan Murray, featuring music from another classic film, *Home Alone*. Pete explained that when he and CYS Music Director Leo Eylar were working out the best repertoire for this unique concert experience they thought "since we'll be streaming music that we've recorded, why not do music that was written to be recorded?"

Pete is especially excited about this concert event for two additional reasons: "Vimeo is a really high quality concert streaming platform, and we'll be employing a professional technician to make it a really polished concert presentation." And... "We're casting a wide net. Everyone in the world will be able to tune in and experience what an outstanding music program we have".

Keep an eye on our website - www.cys.org - for exact details on when and how to view our December 20, 2:30 pm concert.

CYS YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION

In normal times CYS holds its annual Young Artist Competition (YAC) in April or May at Stanford University. The Competition, open to all young musicians under the age of 19, selects two outstanding soloists to perform with our Senior Orchestra the following season. This year, due to pandemic restrictions, the Stanford campus was closed. CYS delayed the Competition, but finding a new location proved difficult due to pandemic closures and the facility requirements - warmup rooms, multiple pianos, etc. Fortunately long time music supporter Jim Callahan, president of Piedmont Pianos, offered his ideal location on Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. Multiple new, concert pianos was not a problem and Jim's facility also had additional space for contestants to warmup prior to their auditions before three independent judges. YAC Chairman Tod Brody oversaw what turned out to be a very smooth and successful event. Strict safety protocols were followed by everyone involved. Our deepest thanks to Jim Callahan and Piedmont Piano.

Although live concerts are on hold at the moment, we hope to find a performance or recording opportunity for our winners some time this season. This year's YAC selected two winners. First prize went to **Emily Hwang** and Second Prize was awarded to **Andromeda Kepecs**.

Emily Hwang Viola

Emily Hwang, 14, is a sophomore at Gunn High School. She began playing viola at the age of 8 under Sujung Seok, and currently studies with Dimitri Murrath at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Pre-College Division.

Emily was selected as the California winner of the 2019 MTNA State Competition in Junior Strings, and was named alternate winner in the 2020 MTNA Southwest Division Competition. She was also a prizewinner in the 2020 ENKOR International Strings Competition, 2019 ASTA San Francisco Solo Competition, and was a finalist chosen for NPR's "From the Top."

In addition, she was awarded first prize in the 2020 NorCal Viola Society Young Violists Competition, the 2020 US Open Music Competition, the 2020 DVC/HNU Young Artists Competition, the 2017 United States International Music Competition, the 2018 Korean



American Music Supporters Association Competition, the 2018 Bay Area Music Association Competition, the 2016 and 2017 Silicon Valley Music Competition, and the 2016 and 2015 Korea Times Music Competition.

As a soloist, Emily performed with the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra in 2017, and was given the opportunity to play with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra at their 2018 Gala Concert. She has also performed at Weill Hall, Carnegie Hall, as a winner of the 2016 American Protégé Piano and Strings Competition, and appeared in the SFCM Tiny Dorm Concert series in May 2020.

Andromeda Kepecs Violin

Violinist Andromeda Kepecs, age 16, is a junior at Menlo School. She began her violin studies at age four with Joel Pattinson, and currently studies with David Chernyavsky. She played in the Golden State Youth Orchestra for nine years, and is currently co-concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, which she joined in 2017. She has participated in three European tours, and has attended the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, Meadowmount, Music at Tateuchi, and Online Solo Strings Intensive. Last year, she was a member of the Youth Chamber Musician's Atlas Quartet, which placed in the Galante Competition. Andromeda



is a five-time winner of the GSYO competition and a prizewinner of the Fremont Symphony Young Artist Competition. This year, she won a fellowship for Aspen Music Festival and School. In her free time, Andromeda enjoys playing volleyball and making boba.