

URBAN HARPIST



Volume 1, Issue 1

April 2011

Dear Supporter,

As the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble enters the spring of its eleventh year, we are proud of the accomplishments of our students and the stability of our program. We started with two students and a borrowed harp. Today, we have 60 students and 15 harps! Our Winter Holiday Concert gave our young performers a chance to show off their skills. We are constantly amazed by how far students can come in a short time when they have quality instruction, support and guidance.

Our Honors Ensemble, made up of our advanced students, continues to perform around the metro Atlanta area. Our students grow in poise and in confidence as they perform, and every performance leads to more invitations.

Of course, not all of our students will become professional harpists, however, we know that the skills they learn as they study this complex and beautiful instrument will serve them well in whatever they choose to do. It takes determination, persistence, practice and a love of music to play the harp. We are so proud when a student decides to study harp in college. Our first student, Mason Morton, is pursuing his masters degree in harp performance at Boston University. He recently began teaching middle-school students in the Boston public school system.

We attribute the recent success of our organization to our amazing teacher, Carolyn Lund. Not only is she a talented harpist in her own right, but she is a gifted teacher, as well. She brings out the best in our students and introduces them to classical music while arranging popular songs they hear on the radio.

As we continue to grow, we need your support. We need funding to sustain our organization. Our most pressing needs are for contributions to our instrument fund and to the Elisabeth Remy Johnson Scholarship Fund, which provides opportunities for our most promising students to attend summer harp camps around the country.

We also need you to attend our students' performances. Your presence in the audience and your applause mean so much to them. We thank you, our supporters, for embracing this unique vision of a premier harp ensemble for African-American students.

Kind regards,

Roselyn Lewis

Executive Director



Our Mission

The mission of the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble is to deliver quality musical instruction on the harp, develop music reading skills and musicianship.

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SPOKEN FROM THE HEART: *Our Students*

We love to hear positive words from the people who hear our students perform. And we also want to hear what our students have to say about the UYHE and the impact it has had on their lives. Here are excerpts from the journals of students who are in their first year of harp instruction:

Lenisa Farmer, 11th grade ~ *Playing the harp actually brings joy to my heart. I never knew I would have a passion for playing the instrument. It always keeps me calm and just makes all my worries disappear.*

Arreon Stewart, 10th grade ~ *When I play the harp, it makes me feel really happy. At times I can be quiet, and that makes me seem like I have no voice. When I get on a harp, it gives me a voice.*

Shanique Chaney, 11th grade ~ *Going through everything I am going through at home, coming to school doesn't seem so hard because I know I get to come to Ms. Lund's class. I am going to stick with the harp program. When I walk into class the first thing I say is, 'Finally, I'm home.'*



~ **Aayonna Ward, 10th grade** ~ *Being in the harp program is nice. People are patient, you have laughter, and people get along. Harp helps me build my level of confidence as a girl growing up.*

Julio Rodriguez, 9th grade ~ *When I first went to harp, the teacher looked at me and said, 'Welcome.' I strolled in and muttered, 'This is so uncool.' But I found out about the history of the harp, and a couple of weeks later we had our first master class. I had a perfect grade, and it had a side note that said I was a natural.*

Malik Shropshire, 10th grade ~ *When I play the harp it makes me feel like I'm in another world.*

Felipe Rowland, 10th grade ~ *The harp makes me feel hope ... It helps me calm down and get back on track.*

Reflections on the Winter Concert

Friends and parents who braved a cold night for the Urban Youth Ensemble's Winter Holiday Concert were rewarded for their efforts. From the inspirational opening piece, *La Joyeuse*, to the final bow following *Joy to the World*, the concert was a joyous occasion. Inside Leete Hall at Carver High School, students performed classical and contemporary songs, displaying poise on stage and a remarkable command of their instruments.

Nancy Hamilton, the UYHE board treasurer, was amazed at the musical growth of the students who began their harp studies just four months earlier. "Some of the students have never experienced learning to play an instrument before they began introductory harp," Nancy says. "I'm always delighted with the winter performance and, as a result, look forward to the spring concert. What amazing progress will these same students make from December to May?" Nancy was also impressed with Artistic Director Carolyn Lund's "complete composure and delight in having the students perform!" She selects repertoire that pushes the students, but at the same time intrigues and engages them," Nancy says. "We are most fortunate to have her."

Students introduced their songs and shared a little about each selection with the audience. Program graduate, Desmond Johnson, took unabashed pride in his interpretation of *Harp Concerto in B-flat*, noting that it is known as one of the most difficult songs to play. An unexpected and moving vocal performance accompanied, *O Holy Night*.

The Honor Ensemble performed, *Halo*, a ballad made famous by Beyonce Knowles. Carolyn arranged the song for her harp students, and it sounded as if the song was composed with them in mind. The electric concert had something for everyone.

Dzauya Nkuchwayo, an UYHE board member, was moved by *Still, Still*, performed by sisters Leah, Maya and Zori Jones.

Says Dzauya, "Watching sisters in different stages of their lives share a common love for the harp, as well as working to perform such a sweet piece, gives a small insight into the relationship they share."

SEVEN QUESTIONS FOR CAROLYN

The UYHE is fortunate to have Ms. Carolyn Lund as our artistic director. Carolyn began playing the harp at age nine, and received her master of music degree last year from the University of Arizona. She has won awards and performed all over the world. In addition to being an accomplished musician, Carolyn has a natural gift for teaching.

Board member Patti Ghezzi spoke with Carolyn recently about her teaching philosophy and her life outside the UYHE:



1. Kids arrive at the UYHE with no harp experience. What are the first steps you take in getting kids ready to become students of such a complex instrument? *I teach them all the basics, such as the history, what harps are made of and how much they cost. And then, of course it is important to play songs and model for them what a harp can sound like. Because it is such a unique instrument, everyone is pretty excited to give it a try.*
2. People marvel at how far students can come in a short time. What are the keys to success for beginners? *Repetition. It is such an advantage to be able to see students every other day and therefore be able to reinforce technique over and over again. And for the students to have that much access to a teacher, as opposed to just having a private lesson once a week as most other harpists do, really contributes to their success.*
3. Once our students make it to the beginning stage where they can perform and make real music on the harp, how do they get to the next step? *It is actually pretty difficult. The harp demands a lot of dexterity and strength in the hands, something that takes time to develop. Some students have a real gift and can play fast tricky passages from the get-go. But others have to spend a lot of time doing strengthening exercises. It's important to start early and play every day, if possible.*
4. How do you choose songs for the ensemble? *I try to choose a variety of classical and pop songs. This semester, in particular, I was sensing that some students were getting a bit tired of doing classical pieces, so I opened it up and asked everyone what they wanted to learn to play. I must say, the classes came up with some great ideas. We are playing mostly pop songs at the next concert, and the students are having a blast learning songs by The Beatles, Coldplay and Bruno Mars, to name a few. I want to break the mold of what people think a harp can do.*
5. With kids having such different degrees of natural talent, motivation and opportunity for practice, what is your philosophy in teaching them? *Everyone does learn at a different pace. I do a lot of arranging. I can arrange each part to fit each student's ability. I have learned that the biggest detriment to motivation is giving students a part that is above their ability. Students need to feel challenged, yes, but they also need to feel like they can really perfect their part and be proud of their contribution to the ensemble.*
6. How does the UYHE impact your career as a performer? *Moving to Atlanta has been wonderful for my career. I have been able to play with some of the local symphonies, which I love to do. I still try to take lessons and am actually working toward playing in a harp competition this summer!*
7. What do you like to do for fun? *I am very close with my family, and I'm lucky because they live close by in Augusta. So whenever I have free time, I go home and hang out with my three brothers. They are hilarious!*



• In-School Program:

Currently, the day classes at Carver reach over 60 students from grades 9 -12. Students receive 90 minutes of instruction three days a week. Additionally, Thursdays are focused on applied music theory on the harp, assisting those students new to reading music.

• After School Program:

The after school sessions are held on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday and incorporate students from other Atlanta schools. These rehearsals focus on ensemble repertoire emphasizing the development of musical skills, teamwork and precision. The

Thursday class is dedicated to the Honor Ensemble comprised of the most advanced students.

• Honors Ensemble:

The ensemble is comprised of five students who are proficient on the harp and exhibit advanced music reading skills and musicianship.

DIME A DAY PHILANTHROPY

A dime a day = \$3.00 a month or \$36.50 a year... but you are not limited to making donations of \$36.50.

As we face these challenging economic times, we need your help to continue to offer this unique musical opportunity for our young people. The population that we serve is economically disadvantaged but enthusiastic and talented. The Urban Youth Harp Ensemble, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization, which means your contributions are tax-deductible.



We invite you to make a donation of \$50, \$100 or more, to make a significant impact. Make checks payable to *Urban Youth Harp Ensemble*.



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FOR THE ARTS

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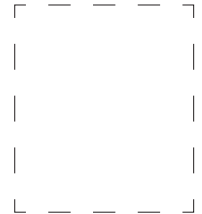


FULTON COUNTY
ARTS COUNCIL
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF ART

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*We encourage you to share your UYHE experiences with 'Urban Harpist' author
and Board of Directors member, Patti Ghezzi of Greater Good Communications. Send your
comments to pattighezzi@comcast.net.*

UYHE'S FIRST STUDENT LIVING HIS DREAM IN BOSTON

Mason Morton didn't know what a harp was when his middle school chorus teacher asked him if he wanted to play the instrument.

He agreed to try, becoming the first student of the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble, founded by his chorus teacher, Roselyn Lewis, and Elisabeth Remy Johnson, principal harpist for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Remy Johnson was Mason's first harp teacher. She discovered a student with a gift and determination.

Today, Mason, 23, is working on a master's degree in harp performance at Boston University, where he studies under renown harpist, Ann Hobson Pilot, retired principal harpist for the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

After graduating from high school, Mason earned his bachelor's in harp performance at Rice University in Houston, Texas, studying with Paula Page, principal harpist for the Houston Symphony. He was terrified to leave the familiarity of Houston for the unknown city of Boston, but he went for the opportunity to study with Ms. Hobson Pilot.

The teacher and the city proved a good fit. Mason performs regularly with orchestras and as a soloist and chamber musician. "I'm living the life of a professional musician," Mason says.

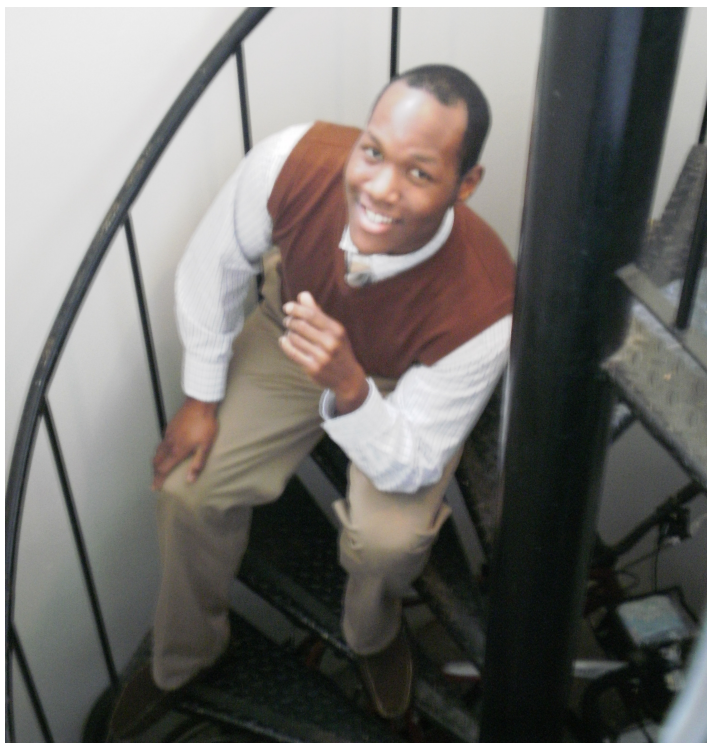
And, he has come full circle. In January, he began teaching six middle school students at Timilty Middle School in the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury. He gives each one a private lesson twice a week. "The goal is for them to get to compete full college scholarships, like I did," he says. The program has six harps, acquired about 10 years ago for a program that didn't endure. Mason was hired to help restart the program, which is primed for success this time. The school's veteran principal, Valeria Lowe-Barehmi, keeps a harp in her office so she can supervise the kids' practice sessions.

Mason had butterflies the night before he started, but as soon as he sat down with his students, he felt comfortable. "Our atmosphere is very encouraging," he says. "If I'm not clear, they let me know. They freely ask questions, so I think they trust me." His students relate to him, because he has been where they are.



Raised by his grandparents, Mason grew up with Motown, not Mozart. "I remember how hard it is to not grow up around classical music and suddenly be surrounded with it," Mason says.

As a child, he turned to music because he wasn't good at sports. "I was good at schoolwork, but I was always looking for that extra thing." He started playing the piano, practicing at a neighbor's house. When he discovered the harp, he knew he had found more than just something extra to do. He had found his calling. But mastering the complex instrument didn't come easily. He struggled with reading music and lost confidence. At times, he worked so hard he almost burned out.



These days, he rises as early as 5 a.m. to juggle his busy schedule. But he is learning to live a balanced life, with time for fun as well as work. He encourages his students to do the same. After finishing his master's degree, he may go on to get his doctorate. His goal is to play with a major orchestra. He is also interested in working in radio and television. Teaching will also likely be part of his future. He got his start in teaching at a summer camp sponsored by the UYHE.

In addition to Ms. Lewis, Ms. Remy Johnson, Ms. Page and Ms. Hobson Pilot, Mason counts among his influences Nella Rigell, principal harpist for the Atlanta Ballet, who helped him rediscover the confidence he lost. "She always told me I had talent and could make it as a professional," Mason says. "It wasn't until fairly recently that I began to believe her." He also credits his Aunt Muriel, known as Auntie, who told him early on that the harp could open doors for him. "She said she always saw me doing something on stage," Mason says.

At the UYHE, Mason is an inspiration to students, board members and friends. We are so proud of all he has accomplished and excited for his bright, bright future.

