



Program Biography

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The Young Eight is a string octet of African American string players from The Boston Conservatory, Cleveland Institute of Music, Indiana University, The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, Mannes College of Music, New England Conservatory of Music and Peabody Conservatory of Music. Founded in 2002 at the North Carolina School of the Arts by director Quinton I. Morris, the critically acclaimed octet is dedicated to exposing various communities to the arts through classical music. In the four years since its inception, The Young Eight has established itself as one of the next generation's most dynamic and energetic chamber ensembles presenting various performances in New York City, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Miami, Seattle, and Austin, among others.

The Young Eight performed its concert debut at the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall at Seattle Symphony's Benaroya Hall in June 2003. During the stay in Seattle, The Young Eight performed live on National Public Radio, a Young Artists Concert at Seattle Symphony's Soundbridge Discovery and Learning Center and other local radio and television stations. The Young Eight have also collaborated with guest artists, including soprano Indra Thomas, pianist, David Antony Lofton, poet, Toyia Taylor, The Providence String Quartet and composers, David N. Baker, Michael DePaul, and Earl Louis Stewart.

The octet has been recognized in various parts of the country for its dedication to children, music and education. A series of concerts, residency programs, seminars and workshops are geared towards exposing various communities to classical music around the country. The Young Eight has served as String Octet in Residence at the North Carolina School of the Arts. Currently, the octet is in residence at Huston-Tillotson College, Austin and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Twin Lake, Michigan. Other residency programs have included the Harlem School of the Arts, Community Music Works, First Philadelphia Charter School for Literacy, and Winston-Salem State University.

Members of The Young Eight have won individual competitions, including the Sphinx Competition, performed with the nation's top orchestras, and given solo recitals around

the world. Members include Mariana Green-Hill, violin (Mannes College of Music); Kenneth L. Jarvis, violin (Indiana University); John H. Littlejohn, violin (Peabody Conservatory of Music); Quinton I. Morris, violin (The Boston Conservatory); Christopher Jenkins (Manhattan School of Music); Dawn Michelle Smith, viola (The Juilliard School); Ryan Murphy, cello (Cleveland Institute of Music); and Tahirah Whittington, cello (New England Conservatory of Music).

Mariana Green-Hill, violin

Mariana Green-Hill is a winner of the Sphinx Organization's Seventh Annual Competition where she performed with the Sphinx Symphony. She was a first place winner of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Competition and has been a featured guest soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops. In addition to her solo performances, Mrs. Green-Hill is an experienced chamber musician. She is a founding member of The Young Eight and for eight years was the second violinist of the Amaryllis String Quartet. The quartet performed on occasion with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Pamela Frank. Mrs. Green-Hill received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music from The Juilliard School and is currently a Professional Studies student at the Mannes College of Music studying violin with Ann Setzer and Ida Kavafian.

Kenneth Jarvis, violin

Kenneth Jarvis, a violinist and dancer, studied at Indiana University. He studied violin with Paul Biss, Dr. Jonathan Sturm and the late Mr. James Brauning, and ballet with Violette Verdy, Leslie Peck and Jacques and Virginia Cesbron. Mr. Jarvis has played concerts with The Richmond Symphony of Indiana, The Brevard Music Festival Orchestra, The Des Moines Symphony, The Des Moines Metro Opera, and has been awarded fellowships to attend the Brevard Music Festival. Mr. Jarvis has also choreographed and danced for various dance companies and events throughout Indiana. He has taught for a number of dance studios and currently teaches, performs and competes ballroom dance with Fred Astaire Dance in Chicago, IL. He hopes to continue dancing, choreographing and performing violin professionally. Mr. Jarvis serves as the Dean of Admissions for The Young Eight String Seminar.

John H. Littlejohn, violin

John H. Littlejohn is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory where he completed his Master of Music and a Graduate Performance Diploma in violin performance with Herbert Greenberg. A native of Lansing/Midland, Michigan, Mr. Littlejohn began studying the violin at age ten in a public school system and began private lessons at the age of sixteen. His former teachers have included Anthony Elliott, Stephen Shipp, Andrew Jennings, and Yizhak Shotten (viola). He is currently the concertmaster of the Newark Symphony and a member of the Baltimore Opera Orchestra. In addition, he teaches private lessons to at-risk children through the Enterprise Foundation Music Program. His solo engagements have included performances with the Cosmic Chamber Orchestra and a European tour with the International Youth Symphony Orchestra in 2003. As a music producer/hip-hop artist, Mr. Littlejohn produces under the name "Adidam" and has recorded a self-titled debut CD. In 2002, he was the winner of the Virtu Foundation Instrument Competition and performs on a violin by Oliver Radke.

Quinton I. Morris, violin

Quinton I. Morris enjoys a busy schedule balancing careers as a concert violinist, chamber musician, teacher, and director and founder of The Young Eight. Originally from Seattle, Washington, Mr. Morris has performed solo concerto and recitals and chamber music performances in the United States, the Middle East, France, Spain and Africa. He is the recipient of numerous competition awards including The Boston Conservatory Chamber Music Honors Competition, the Louisiana Junior Philharmonic Orchestra Young Artist's Concerto Competition and the Seattle Philharmonic Concerto Competition. Mr. Morris is on the artist roster and faculty for the Austin Chamber Music Center. Currently, Mr. Morris is a fellowship student attending The University of Texas at Austin as a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree studying violin with Miró String Quartet members, Daniel Ching and Brian Lewis. He earned a Master of Music degree from The Boston Conservatory, where he studied with Lynn Chang and a Bachelor of Music from the North Carolina School of the Arts, where he studied with Kevin Lawrence.

Christopher Jenkins, viola

Christopher Jenkins, a native of New York City, is a freelance violist active in the New York area and on faculty at the Bloomingdale School of Music. He has coached chamber groups at Harvard University and taught violin privately in the school system in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 2001 and 2002, he was a fellow at the Perlman Music Program, run by Toby and Itzhak Perlman. In the summer of 2002 Mr. Jenkins traveled with the program to Shanghai to work with and coach Chinese instrumentalists. He is a graduate from the Manhattan School of Music, where he earned the Professional Certificate studying viola with Michael Tree and Karen Dreyfus. He also earned his Master of Music at New England Conservatory, where he studied with Martha Katz, and his Bachelor of Arts (with honors) at Harvard University, where he studied with Michelle LaCourse. Mr. Jenkins plays a 2002 Marcello Villa viola, generously loaned by David Kerr in partnership with the Sphinx Organization. Mr. Jenkins serves as the chairman for The Young Eight Composer's Competition.

Dawn Michelle Smith, viola

Dawn Michelle Smith is a graduate of New World School of the Arts High School in Miami, Florida. She has appeared as guest soloist with the Moscow State Symphony in Russia and New World Symphony in Miami Beach under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas. She has also performed with renowned jazz violinist Regina Carter and legendary jazz musician Chuck Mangione. In 2002, Ms. Smith received a full fellowship to the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado. In 2003, she was the recipient of the Florida First Lady's Scholarship Award, and during the summer of that same year she was one of the featured soloists in the Santa Fe Opera Orchestra's summer concert series in Santa Fe, NM. In her spare time she teaches at the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center and performs gratis for "Missionaries of the Poor." In addition, she is also an active member of the NAACP. Ms. Smith is a viola student at The Juilliard School in New York City where she studies with Juilliard String Quartet violist Samuel Rhodes. Ms. Smith serves as the education outreach coordinator for The Young Eight.

Ryan Murphy, cello

Ryan Murphy is originally from St. Louis, Missouri. He is a graduate from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with Cleveland Orchestra principal cellist Stephen Geber. Currently, Mr. Murphy is a student pursuing a Master of Music degree at The Juilliard School with cellist Bonnie Hampton. His past teachers have included his mother, Melanie Murphy; Caroline Eddy; and Glenda Piek. He has performed solo radio performances in St. Louis and Washington, D.C., and has appeared as guest soloist with the University City Symphony, the Detroit Symphony and the Cleveland Orchestra. He has participated and performed in master classes presented by the Emerson, Cavani, and New Zealand String Quartets. In addition, he has performed in master classes for Janos Starker, Norman Fisher, Truls Mork, and Cleveland String Quartet member Peter Salaff. Mr. Murphy plays a 1998 cello by Peter Staszal on loan from the workshop of William Harris Lee in Chicago.

Tahirah Whittington, cello

Cellist Tahirah Whittington, originally from Houston, Texas, has performed for audiences in the United States, Chile, Japan, France, Italy, and Spain. Her solo performances have included appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C., and the Ann Arbor Symphony in Michigan, as a result of winning first prize at the 1999 Sphinx Competition. An avid chamber musician, Ms. Whittington is a member of the acclaimed Core Ensemble (piano, cello, percussion) that tours with an actor and performs Chamber Music Theater. She is also a member of the Ritz Chamber Players based in Jacksonville, Fla. Ms. Whittington received her Master of Music in cello performance from The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Joel Krosnick and received her Bachelor of Music at the New England Conservatory as a student of Laurence Lesser. Ms. Whittington serves as the artistic adviser for The Young Eight.

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