

# URBAN HARPIST



Volume IV, Issue II

SPRING 2016

Dear Fans and Supporters,

Here we grow again and everyone is thrilled! The year has been a magnificent one for the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble. Your support has made it possible to reach out to more students and to offer an even more vigorous program to our students who see the exceptional value, challenge and, yes, the fun of playing the harp.

In all honesty, we don't think there is another program like the Urban Youth Ensemble. We are so very proud of the Legacy you have helped us create and that we are still creating. With fifteen years now under our belts, we anticipate more excitement for our students in the years to come. I'm happy to tell you about the few changes that we have coming.

First, we look forward to hiring an additional teacher. With two teachers it means that we will be able to add more students, something the school and the parents have been asking for. Our students will number at least 110.

With the help of our friends and supporters, you have made it possible to keep giving our students the unique experience that learning the harp provides. While all of our students may not continue on as harpists or even music majors once they enter college, learning to play the harp teaches valuable skills and lessons about how to be successful in many areas of life and reveals to them so much about their own inner strength and tenacity that will follow them throughout their lives.

This is also an expression of gratitude for having such a wonderful group of students, supportive parents and a superb administration at Drew Charter School under the guidance of Mr. Doran that is second to none. I am grateful for our wonderful Artistic Director and instructor, Carolyn Munford, who absolutely "takes us there" by providing a harp program that students not only excel in, but enjoy.

And we appreciate that you have spread the word among your, friends, your families and your co-workers. We are thrilled to watch our audience grow with each concert. When I think of our early start and the fact that we have touched over 500 students, I am truly grateful and humble because it is only because of you. Thank you Atlanta City Cultural Arts and their Power2Give and grants program and to National Endowment for the Arts.

Thank you

*Roselyn M. 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 to at-risk urban youth.

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## Student Voices

Watching the students perform is wonderful. Hearing why they like the program and how it impacts them as students is priceless. We spoke to several harp students, and are encouraged by their personal experiences.



The music we're playing speaks to the youth and the public. It puts them in a different world where they can be calm and think about the different melodies. That's why I like it. I'm not just doing something for me, I'm doing something for everyone else. Harp can take you somewhere you never thought was possible.

– Frederick Mitchell, 6th grade



Life without harp would really bring me down. Harp is one of those things you get so excited about when you get it right. I don't think I have anything else that clicks with me and calms me and excites me at the same time. The moment when everybody gets a song it is the most amazing thing on earth. I'm really proud to be in harp and I hope to play it for many years.

– Kablo Garrison, 6th grade



I never get that frustrated in harp class. It calms me really well. If I had a harp of my own, I would literally stay at it all day every day. When I play I feel amazing energy that rushes through the harp to your fingers and it's beautiful. It can get you in a place where it's only you and the harp.

– Michelle McCurdy, 6th grade



Harp is an amazing thing that I get to do every other day. It's fun and entertaining and I know that it can open up a lot of doors for me when I'm older. I like the feeling of being on the harp. I love the way it sounds like a waterfall. It's breathtaking. I want to have a harp when I get older so I can play it for my family.

– Jasmyn Braziel, 6th grade



The harp is a beautiful instrument and not many people think of playing it. Harp is wonderful. You get to play around with different music that you like. Playing the harp is fun and one of the classes I look forward to in the day. You get to express yourself in a way that you can't in any other subjects.

– Della Goines, 6th grade



Harp gives me stress relief. If I'm having an angry week I can just come to the harp and it will flow out of my fingertips into the music. It is very restful and peaceful. Even though my fingers hurt I still love to play the harp. I feel so amazed and proud of myself when I hear my music.

– Ashton Billingslea, 6th grade

## Summer Opportunities!

There are several exciting opportunities for our students to be able to continue playing the harp throughout the summer.

For the first time ever, Drew has partnered with the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble to host a summer camp. All current harp students are invited to attend this week-long event, which will be held June 20-24 between the hours of 9 a.m. – noon each day. Carolyn Munford has recruited additional harp instructors to teach throughout the week.

“This camp is a chance for students from different classes to come together in a more relaxed environment,” Mrs. Munford said. “We'll be learning lots of pop songs, experimenting with different instruments, and playing music games, all while learning.”

To sign up for the camp, e-mail Mrs. Munford at [carolyn.lund@drewcharterschool.org](mailto:carolyn.lund@drewcharterschool.org).



The second big event for our harpists is the opportunity to attend the American Harp Society National Conference, which is being held in Atlanta for the first time ever. The AHS is the largest organization of harpists worldwide, and typically sees 500 or more harpists gathering for their conferences every other year. The conference will be held at the Emory Conference Center Hotel from June 30 – July 3, and will feature all-day workshops, concerts, exhibit halls, and networking events.

Thanks to generous donations, 20 of our students have received scholarships to attend the conference free of charge. The Urban Youth Harp Ensemble will be featured performers on the opening day of the concert. In addition, four of our students have been chosen to perform as part of the Honors Ensemble, a select group of some of the best young harpists across the country. The Honors Ensemble will perform alongside world-renowned harpists Bridget Kibbey, Park Stickney, and soprano Indra Thomas. The concert will be held on June 30 at 8 p.m. at the Schwartz Center on Emory University's campus. Tickets can be purchased at the Emory box office.

*We look forward to a wonderful summer of memorable music with our harpists!*

## Board Member Spotlight: Gwen Ellis

Gwen Ellis' role as a member of the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble Board of Director's was destined. Like several board members and community supporters, Gwen's first experience with the Urban Youth Harp ensemble came at the invitation of long-time friend, Roselyn Lewis. "Knowing my love for music, Rose invited me to a concert. The rest is history," she says.

Gwen brings a rich knowledge of non-profit sector, music education, and corporate work experience to the UYHE Board of Directors. She began her professional journey as a music school teacher and eventually settled into a 39 year career as a Flight Attendant for a major airline. In the midst of her airline work, she worked for a non-profit consulting firm. Gwen's service to the community is just as extensive and impactful as her professional work.

She serves on the Board of Directors for Villages of Carver YMCA, is a member of Clark Atlanta University Guild and the proud Founder & President of Debora H. Boyd Foundation. Gwen also volunteers with local organizations, like Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, and Shepherd Spinal Center.

Her passion for music programming began at a young age. Gwen says, "I can't remember a time when music was not part of my life". The personal experience as a music student and teacher, Gwen knows first-hand the benefits to students when they are enrolled in music classes. "Their ability to count, comprehend, and multi-task are enhanced as a result of their participation in music," she says.

Gwen would love to see the UYHE program continue to grow, in popularity, that there will be a waiting list. She says, "Urban Youth Harp Ensemble is a 'jewel' program Atlanta needs to know about and embrace...When you get involved, you help a student dream, you help a student find their creativity."



## Notes from Artistic Director Carolyn Munford

Q: Do you have any favorite moments from the past year?

A: One moment that immediately comes to mind is when one of my beginning 6th grade classes was learning an ensemble piece. I divided the class into groups of three and asked that they work together as a team to learn their part. I watched as two of my students helped their third team member learn her part, but the way they taught her was so inspiring to me. They showed so much patience, kindness, and friendship toward her as they all three worked together to play perfectly in harmony. It was a lesson to me to be more patient as a teacher, and a testament to the wonderful character of these students who I am fortunate to teach.

Q: How do you keep the students engaged in learning classical music?

A: I have found that students love classical music, if they are prepared to listen in the right way. I try to give context to every piece of music that is played in class by explaining about the composer's life and talking about how this piece of music makes them feel. There is certainly a progression of pieces that I like to use that begins with the classical pieces they have heard before. One of them is Mozart's "A Little Nightmusic", which you'll hear on the concert. These students truly love it and I think that comes across on stage.

Q: What are some ways that parents can support their children's musical study?

A: Our parents do such a wonderful job of supporting these students in their harp studies. Of course, coming to the concerts and praising your children for a job well done, asking about harp class and what pieces they are working on, and encouraging them in all the hard work they do are important. Parents could also encourage them to listen to classical music. YouTube is a great resource to watch performances by other harpists. Here are some artists to look up – Emmanuel Ceysson, Isabelle Moretti, the American Youth Harp Ensemble, and Park Stickney.

Q: This is your chance to brag about your students – what are some of their greatest achievements this year?

A: Several of our students have had notable performances around the community. Zoe Andrews, Kyia O'Neal, and Kimberly Walker performed at the Coretta Scott King birthday celebration at the end of April. Jabari Freeman performed a solo in front of 300 people at the Atlanta Rotary Club, and Payton Gunner and Trinity Mosley are making great strides as members of the Atlanta Symphony Talent Development Program.

Q: What is the best part of teaching young people to play the harp?

A: I love the harp. Learning music and performing has been such an important part of my life, and I feel so fortunate to be able to pass on this love with my students. They are hard-working, joyful, and at times hilarious. We have a lot of fun in the classroom, but the best part is seeing everyone come together on the night of the concert and create beautiful music. Some of the best moments of my life are when I am able to watch my students perform.



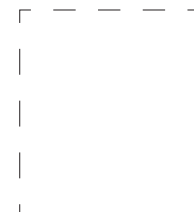
# POWER2GIVE



The donations made by community individuals and businesses go a long way to support our school-year programming.

In March, UYHE launched the 2016 Spring Power2Give to raise \$5,000. Power2Give is a \$1 to \$1 match program made possible through a partnership with the City of Atlanta Cultural Affairs. By raising \$2,500 from our family and friends, UYHE will receive a matching gift of \$2,500. The money raised through our Spring Power2Give challenge will

will support the stipend for the Artistic Director and a teaching assistant in the amount of \$2500, \$500.00 for music, \$1800.00 for harp strings and \$200.00 for daily snacks for students. *A special thank you to our Spring Power2Give donors, reflected on our 2015-2016 donor list.*



CONTACT US: ROSELYN LEWIS • EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR • URBAN YOUTH HARP ENSEMBLE  
3259 BRIARWOOD BOULEVARD • EAST POINT, GA 30344  
404.271.5899 • ROSELYN@MINDSPRING.COM • WWW.URBANHARP.ORG