



**Atlanta  
Symphony  
Orchestra**

# TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Preparing Gifted  
Black and Latinx  
Musicians for  
Careers in  
Classical Music

[aso.org/TDP](http://aso.org/TDP)

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra cares deeply about advancing the vitality and relevance of symphonic music. An important step on this journey is creating a stronger association between the musicians and the communities we serve. More than 20 years ago, a group of Atlanta community leaders recognized this challenge and set out to find a way to attract more talented young musicians of color into classical music careers. Led by Azira Hill, one of the longest-running, year-round musical education diversity programs was born, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Talent Development Program (TDP).

Since its inception, the TDP has served talented young musicians, and the entire field of classical music, by providing the highest level of musical training to hundreds of Black and Latinx students. Nearly 100 students have graduated from the program and gone on to attend top music schools, including The Juilliard School, Curtis Institute of Music, Manhattan School of Music and the Peabody Institute, to name but a few. This strong educational foundation has led many to careers in orchestras, teaching and performance.



# EXPRESS YOURSELF

As of 2014, only 1.8 percent of the orchestral musician community is African American, and only 2.5 percent is Latino.

(2014, *Forty Years of Fellowship*, League of American Orchestras)

"The lack of diversity in the orchestra industry is systemic and requires a major shift in the system," said ASO Music Director Robert Spano. "With Atlanta being such a diverse city, we find it essential to participate in preparing Black and Latinx musicians for careers in classical music."

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's commitment is partly demonstrated through an investment of a quarter of \$1 million in the Talent Development Program each year.

2.5%  
LATINO  
1.8%  
AFRICAN  
AMERICAN



"The Talent Development Program taught me how to play with emotion. I had this breakthrough when I was practicing a beautiful piece by Bottesini for spring recitals. With that piece, I finally learned how to connect with the music on an emotional level instead of just playing notes."

– ANGELA LEEPER,  
TDP student, bass

"I learned how to play assertively, demonstrate confidence through my posture and make efficient use of my breathing technique. My peers started noticing how well I was playing during rehearsals and I knew it was due to my instructor's teaching and my increasing desire to keep practicing whenever I have the chance."

– VINCENT TAPIA,  
TDP student, trombone



"My breakthrough moment came when my teacher taught me to play more expressively. He helped me realize that I am playing for myself and no one else. That realization allowed me to put all my emotion into my playing and it is a more honest form of expression."

– ROLAND MASON,  
TDP student, violin





Many TDP alumni have contributed considerably to the extension of the pipeline for a more diverse orchestral music field.

**ANGELICA HAIRSTON's** Challenge the Stats concerts provide opportunities for professional African American and Latino musicians at the beginning of their careers to showcase their art in premiere performances. The first concert took place in the Boston area while she was in college. She was recently awarded a grant that will allow her to do a similar concert in Atlanta.

**STANFORD THOMPSON** founded the innovative educational and social initiative Play on, Philly! in August 2010 to give students ages 6 to 13 opportunities for personal development through the study of music. The program provides unprecedented access to symphonic music and the opportunity for children to discover their passion for the art.

**DREW FORDE** has established a major social media presence as That Viola Kid, providing advice and insights to high school and college aged students for how to prepare for the top conservatories and guidance on how to survive once you get in. By sharing his experiences, he empowers students to seize their dreams in the professional music field.

**JOSHUA WILLIAMS**, Class of 2018, received a full ride scholarship to The Juilliard School.

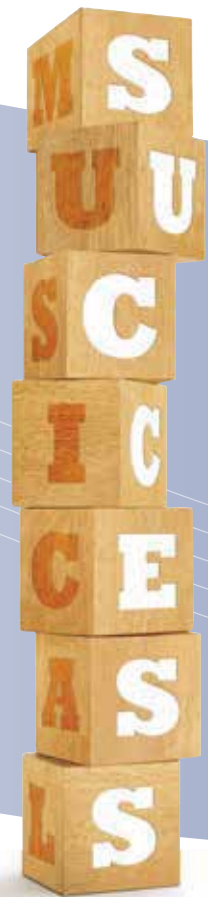
[Click here to watch his story.](#)



# TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ALUMNI

The Talent Development Program creates a space for serious orchestral students to delve in to their training with the support of a major orchestral institution. Students that spend these formative years in the TDP go on to achieve great success in the orchestral world in a myriad of ways.

**MEKHI GLADDEN** joined the Talent Development Program as a sophomore at North Springs High School. An oboe player with a love of music, but no formal training beyond his school band instruction, Mekhi was accepted into the program and began his remarkable journey. Mekhi began rigorous training led by his mentor, ASO oboist Emily Brebach, and he became a member of the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra. Mekhi was selected for Carnegie Hall's 2017 National Youth Orchestra, where he performed at concerts in New York, as well as Mexico, Ecuador and Colombia, all led by the legendary Marin Alsop. Mekhi's journey will continue at The Curtis Institute of Music.



From prestigious awards to participation in distinguished orchestral groups, the accomplishments and affiliations of TDP alumni are far-reaching.

- NEW WORLD SYMPHONY
- ASYO CONCERTMASTER
- ASYO CONCERTO COMPETITION WINNER
- TURTLE ISLAND STRING QUARTET
- SONS OF SERENDIP
- CARNEGIE HALL'S NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA
- GRANT PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL'S PROJECT INCLUSION
- PRESIDENT'S OWN MARINE BAND CONCERTO COMPETITION FINALIST
- TED FELLOW
- EMORY JUNIOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
- SOUTHERN CRESCENT
- ATLANTA WIND YOUTH SYMPHONY
- URBAN YOUTH HARP ENSEMBLE
- AMERICAN TROMBONE WORKSHOP NATIONAL SOLO COMPETITION FINALIST



# MASTER TEACHERS

**"I have seen firsthand what the program offers these students. It is rigorous and serious. What an excellent opportunity to have such support."**

**– GLORIA JONES,**  
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra  
Principal Bass

**"When a young kid walks into the Talent Development Program, they're walking into a lifelong commitment to working to becoming a professional musician."**

**– NATHAN ZGONC,**  
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra  
Second Trombone



**"Students all have talent; that's a given. But for many of them, the Talent Development Program journey is a real challenge... it's not only about developing talent, but nurturing talent."**

**– ELISABETH REMY JOHNSON,**  
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra  
Principal Harp



# PROGRAM OF EXCELLENCE

Each year, 25 students receive intensive instruction, mentoring and performance opportunities, as well as access to the resources of a major American orchestra. Benefits for TDP students include:

- Weekly private lessons with an ASO musician
- Financial assistance with summer music program tuition
- Solo recital and chamber music performances
- Technical and performance juries
- Assistance with preparation for auditions
- Mentoring and one-on-one coaching
- Complimentary tickets to ASO classical concerts for students and their families

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Students in rising fifth to rising tenth grades who have at least one parent who is either Black or Latinx
- Serious music students who have already reached a high level of proficiency on a standard orchestral instrument

## For more information:

- visit [aso.org/TDP](http://aso.org/TDP)
- call the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Education and Community Engagement department, **404.733.4830**
- email [ASOEducation@atlantasymphony.org](mailto:ASOEducation@atlantasymphony.org)

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