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**NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY**  
**WHARTON INSTITUTE FOR THE**  
**PERFORMING ARTS**



**New York Youth Symphony and New Jersey Youth Symphony**  
**Launch Artist Stories Series**



**A weekly virtual conversation series featuring Black artists discussing the importance of equity, inclusion, and representation in the classical music world and music industry.**

BERKELEY HEIGHTS/NEW YORK—The **New York Youth Symphony (NYYS)**, and the **New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS)**, a program of the **Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts**, announced today that they will co-host an **Artist Stories Series**, a series of weekly one-hour

virtual conversations exploring the importance of equity, inclusion, and representation in the classical music, jazz, and Broadway world. Featured guest speakers include **Toyin Spellman-Diaz**, **Kelly Hall-Tompkins**, **Jeff Scott**, **Carmen Ruby Floyd**, **Sean C. Jones**, and **Weston Sprott** discussing what it means to navigate a professional music career. In addition to the sharing of personal experiences, the artists will have the opportunity to impart their insights into needed actions to reinforce accountability and pursue responsive outcomes in American orchestras, music education, and the music industry. Attendees are encouraged to submit questions for the artists in advance, to be answered during a Q&A portion of each session. The six-week webinar series is free and open to the public.

"New York Youth Symphony is proud to partner with the New Jersey Youth Symphony on the *Artist Stories Series*," said Shauna Quill, Executive Director of the New York Youth Symphony. "Both of our organizations are committed to diversifying the voices in music, and that begins by listening to the artists currently in the field. Through their stories and continued conversations, our communities will be able to learn and grow."

"When we truly listen to understand, we learn something new. Through the *Artist Stories Series*, we desire to create a space where young people can listen to and learn from these remarkable artists and their stories," said Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts.

The first event will take place on Wednesday, July 8 and will feature oboist Toyin Spellman-Diaz, an original member of Imani Winds and hailed by the Washington Post for her "smooth, controlled tone and excellent technique." Winner of a Naumburg International Violin Competition Honorarium Prize and featured in the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Kelly Hall-Tompkins will appear on July 15. French horn player and Montclair State University faculty member Jeff Scott will follow on July 22; Broadway and television star Carmen Ruby Floyd on July 29; and Sean C. Jones, the Richard and Elizabeth Case Chair of Jazz at John Hopkins University's Peabody Institute in Baltimore, on August 5. The series will conclude on August 12 with Weston Sprott, trombonist with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Dean of the

Preparatory Division at The Juilliard School where he leads Juilliard Pre-College and the Music Advancement Program.

Each weekly webinar will be hosted on Zoom and livestreamed via YouTube on Wednesday evenings, **July 8-August 12**, from **7-8pm EST**. Zoom login is available at [www.NJYS.org](http://www.NJYS.org) and [www.nyys.org](http://www.nyys.org). Attendees may submit their questions online. For more information, call (908) 771-5544 or email [info@njys.org](mailto:info@njys.org).

“Especially in these challenging times, it is more than essential to open our minds and create a safe space for learning on all levels,” said Peter H. Gistelinck, Executive Director of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts. “Collaborating with fellow institutions like the New York Youth Symphony for this *Artist Stories Series* is a vital part of this ongoing endeavor.”

The **New York Youth Symphony** is the most awarded youth program of its kind in the nation, recognized for its innovative, tuition-free educational programs for talented young musicians. Founded in 1963 as an orchestra to showcase the metropolitan area’s most gifted musicians ages 12-22, its activities have since grown to encompass programs in jazz, chamber music, conducting, composition, and musical theater composition, with performances at world class venues including Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and the Public Theater. Through its commissioning program, First Music, the NYYS has commissioned over 160 works from young composers since 1984.

**The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts’ mission** is to provide the highest quality performing arts education to a wide range of students in a supportive and inclusive environment, where striving for personal excellence inspires and connects those we teach to the communities we serve.

Wharton is New Jersey’s largest independent non-profit community performing arts education center serving over 1,500 students through a range of classes and ensembles including the 15

ensembles of the **New Jersey Youth Symphony**, which serve 500 students in grades 3 – 12 by audition. Beginning with Out of the Box Music and Pathways classes for young children, Wharton offers private lessons, group classes, and ensembles for all ages and all abilities at the **Performing Arts School**. With the belief in the positive and unifying influence of music and the performing arts and that arts education should be accessible to all people regardless of their ability to pay, Wharton teaches all instruments and voice and has a robust musical theater program. Based in Paterson, New Jersey, the **Paterson Music Project** is an El Sistema-inspired program of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts that uses music as a vehicle for social change by empowering and inspiring children through the community experience of ensemble learning and playing.

Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts is located in Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Paterson, NJ and reaches students from 10 counties. All of Wharton's extraordinary faculty members and conductors hold degrees in their teaching specialty and have been vetted and trained to enable our students to achieve their personal best.

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