

# TUSCARAWAS PHILHARMONIC

State of the Art | April 2021

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## "Notes in Search of a Theme."

In early March, 2020, I was just beginning to contemplate getting started on a commission from Tuscarawas Philharmonic. A piece for two string orchestras, to be performed by the beginner and advanced groups in the String Camp 2020.

I had a set of pitches I had plunked out on the piano. Modal – sort of mixolydian/lydian/whatever. No rhythm...all whole notes on a piece of paper. Not really a melody – just a succession of notes. I'd think about it more...later.

"Later" happened on Monday, March 23, 2020. The stay-at-home order was announced, and I sat in my studio early that morning looking out on a world that didn't look all that different in my neighborhood. But when I stepped outside and heard no traffic sounds emanating from I-77 a mile away, I knew we were in a very different reality.

## Tuscarawas Philharmonic Education Outreach

Tuscarawas Philharmonic is pleased to partner with Tuscarawas County music teachers to provide this season's performances as an online venue for classroom learning. These video performances are designed for teachers to use whole, in part, or in conjunction with the orchestra's grant-funded "LinkUp" education program. We are proud to play this important role in music education for Tuscarawas County!

## About Tuscarawas Philharmonic

Tuscarawas Philharmonic is a professional orchestra with both adult and children's choruses, and summer camps for young musicians. To support our mission of providing the highest quality music and music education to the citizens of Tuscarawas County and beyond, please visit our website at: [tuscarawasphilharmonic.org](http://tuscarawasphilharmonic.org) and become a contributing member.

## Join Us on April 10th!

The Tuscarawas Philharmonic will present the sixth concert of its "Intermezzo" season with a virtual performance on Saturday, April 10th at 7:30 p.m. View us at: [tuscarawasphilharmonic.org](http://tuscarawasphilharmonic.org), or on our Facebook or YouTube pages!

I returned to my desk, looked over my set of pitches, and decided it would be the theme for a set of variations. Rather than spend time shaping up the theme, I decided to sketch some variations in contrasting styles to make sure it would work. Something slow, meditative, consoling to start...somehow the moment called for it. The news had informed us that essential workers would continue to work, heroically, and that maybe we'd all somehow forgive debts and just let the money-driven aspects of our society sit out for a while and concentrate on helping people and being nice given the circumstances – it all moved me to want to write music that spoke to that. The piece that emerged earned the title "Lovingkindness" before I had completed it.

I took a break when I knew how "Lovingkindness" would play out and decided to start on a second variation. Fast, in contrast, and I began to work on a whimsical piece I soon entitled "Pixies" – a play on the word "pizzicato" and also a description of the character of the music that was taking shape.

Other pieces began to form on paper and on the computer screen, and a year later I have six movements (there are more in the pipeline) that comprise the theme and variations of a piece I call "Sinfonia for Double String Orchestra." I've always liked that designation – not a symphony – a sinfonia stresses more the literal meaning of the Greek word: "sounding together". Two orchestras, sounding together, supporting, encouraging, challenging, maybe competing with, each other.

The debut happens online on April 10th at 7:30 p.m. I am so grateful to the Board of Tuscarawas Philharmonic and the musicians for making this happen.

Eric



## *Meet the Musician:*

This month, Tuscarawas Philharmonic is pleased to introduce you to violinist Jo Stanovcak. A Youngstown native, Jo is an Akron area resident since 1980 and has performed with Tuscarawas Philharmonic for 25 years. As a child, Jo was drawn to violin through Grand Opera recordings played for her by her grandfather and among her favorites are works by Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Puccini, and Dvorak.

When asked what she enjoys most about playing with Tuscarawas Philharmonic, Jo shared the following: “The orchestra has always felt like a family to me and I find that to be one of its greatest strengths. Eric Benjamin has also proven pivotal in the orchestra’s development, not only as a conductor, but as a visionary composer who consistently sets higher standards for improving both the quality of musicianship and the growth of the organization.”

Happy 25th anniversary, Jo. We are so proud to have you as a member of the Tuscarawas Philharmonic family!



## *Classical Music 101:*

What’s your favorite musical genre? Are you a jazz connoisseur or a country music fan? Perhaps you’re all about blues, or just love rock-and-roll. But, what about classical music? Surprisingly, many people state they don’t like or rarely listen to classical music, despite the fact they may have been trained to play a “classical” instrument.

“Classical music is boring. It all sounds the same!”

Those of us who enjoy classical music know there’s huge diversity within the broad spectrum of “classical” music – and, if it were not for the evolution of the genre throughout the centuries, we would not have the popular music we enjoy today. So, how did we get from Back to rock? To answer that question, we need to take a trip back in time...

The earliest examples of notated music date from the Middle Ages (roughly 500 to 1430 A.D.). Western music originated in the Catholic Church and the earliest notation was intended for intoning chant. Most musical instruments as we know them today had not yet been invented, therefore musical notation consisted of a simple, single line of notes indicating the rise and fall of pitch (the staff had yet to be invented too, so pitch was approximate). By the time of the Renaissance (1430 to 1600), staff notation evolved to indicate precise pitch and the predecessors of the violin family emerged. With the advent of new, more complex instruments, notation could now include harmony and music began to be written for instruments, instead of simply for voice alone.

While the seeds of modern music were planted in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Period, it was not until the Baroque Era (1600 to 1750) that music blossomed into the form recognized today. Composers such as Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, and Telemann introduced chordal structures and harmonic progressions that served as the benchmark for future compositions. Modern instruments began to appear as well, and it was in the Baroque Era the modern orchestra was born! The Classical Period (1750 through the early 19th century) witnessed the meteoric rise of the orchestra and the introduction of the concerto, as well as the invention of the modern piano. Haydn, Clementi, and Mozart expanded the boundaries set by previous composers and wrote for larger orchestras, solo instruments with orchestral accompaniment, and chamber ensembles – most notably the string quartet.

What about Beethoven? Beethoven served as the bridge between two eras – the Classical Period and the Romantic Era. From the early 19th through early 20th centuries, composers such as Beethoven, Schumann, Berlioz, and Brahms redefined classical music. In addition to contributing to the wealth of orchestral, solo, and chamber repertoire, composers of the Romantic Era introduced programmatic music – music that shunned orthodox structure and told a story or painted a picture through music. If you have watched the Disney movie *Fantasia*, you're heard a perfect example of programmatic music: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, by Paul Dukas. That brings us to the 20th century...and today. The 20th century, or Modern Era, was all about experimentation. The only rule was that there were no rules. Pioneers such as Stravinsky, Ives, and John Cage shocked listeners and critics alike with music that defied established paradigms. Conventional instruments used in unconventional ways? Let's try it. Acoustic instruments combined with electronic sounds or electronically distorted? Why not? Throw out conventional notation completely? Go for it! The music of the Modern Era and of today continues to combine tradition with innovation to create a classical genre that reflects our 21st century culture.

So, the next time your favorite pop song comes on the radio, you can thank Bach for that familiar chord progression. Love those improvised jazz solos? They have roots in improvised cadenzas from Classical Period concertos. Does that melody remind you of summer? That's Romantic Era influence at work. Like techno? Try listening to a little Luciano Berio. Or, if none of these are your cup of tea, you could always crank up the stereo and rock out to some Beethoven...

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