



SCHOLARSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Mahesh Balasooriya, Jazz and Classical Pianist, received his Bachelor of Music from USC's Thornton School of Music. In the past, he has won numerous awards including Outstanding Rhythm Player at Monterey Jazz Festival, First Place Award in Charles Dolo Koker Competition, First Place in the John Coltrane Competition, and toured with the All Star Band in Japan. He has worked with such jazz greats as Christian McBride, Roy Hargrove, John Clayton, Eddie Daniels, Hubert Laws, and Patti Austin. He has opened acts for Quincy Jones, Ray Charles, Oscar De La Hoya, Phil Ramone, President and Mrs. Hilary Clinton, and performed at the Hollywood Bowl. Mahesh has done major recording projects at Paramount Studios, Universal Music Productions, and Sony Studios, and was named by jazz radio sponsor, Chuck Niles, as "The Charlie Parker of Sri Lanka."

Kristopher Bowers, Jazz & Classical Pianist, is currently a senior at The Julliard School in New York, where he will be graduating in May, 2010 with a Bachelor of Music Degree. At Julliard, he has studied privately with musicians Eric Reed, Frank Kimbrough, and Kenny Barron. Since his arrival in New York, he has shared the stage or recorded with notable artists such as Terrell Stafford, Terence Blanchard, Branford Marsalis, Ben Wolfe, Benny Green, and Bobby Wilson, to name a few. In addition, Kristopher has performed for Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman, and President Barack Obama. Kristopher is currently forming his own band and hopes to debut a collection of his original music in the near future.

Marvin Brown-King, Classical Pianist, has been playing piano since the age of 10. In 2005, he received a gold medal at the NAACP ACT-SO Competition as well as 1st Place Winner of the NANM-GLB competition; was 2nd Place Winner in the 2006 BEEM Competition (High School Division); and 1st Place Winner in 2007 and 2008 at the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity's 12th District Annual Talent Hunt. Marvin is currently a freshman at West Los Angeles College, majoring in music, with an ultimate goal of achieving his Doctorate of Music.

Helia Daigeau, Classical Tuba Player, graduated from the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts in 2008. She is currently attending Cerritos College with a major in Child Development, focusing on Special Education. Helia is a member of the Orange County Wind Symphony, a professional wind band in its premier concert season. In 2011, Helia will perform at Carnegie Hall with The Orange County Wind Symphony for The New York Wind Band Symposium.

Victor Gould, Jazz Pianist, received his Bachelor of Science in Music at Boston's Berklee College of Music in May, 2009. He won "The Most Outstanding Pianist in the Country" Award from the Thelonious Monk Jazz Institute Competition. Currently, he is working on his Masters Degree at the Thelonious Monk Jazz Institute in New Orleans, where he received a two-year full fellowship. In the past he was awarded Chairs in the Monterey Jazz Festival's Next Generation All-Star Band, and the 2005 Gibson/Baldwin Grammy Jazz Band. While at Los Angeles High School, other past awards included being selected for the Brubeck Summer Institute Program at Berklee College Summer Performance Program, and the Los Angeles Music Center's 2004 Spotlight Award in Jazz. He has also played with the Los Angeles based Jazz and Film Composer, Jason Goldman's professional quartet.

Alexandra Isley, Jazz Vocalist, graduated from UCLA in June, 2009, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Jazz Studies. In the past, she has received numerous awards for jazz performances, including "Best Jazz Vocalist" in Downbeat Magazine's 2005 Student Awards, and is a past winner of both NANM and BEEM competitions. As a recording artist, she continues to integrate R&B with jazz, and is currently working as well as focusing on her career as a singer and a songwriter.

Princeton Parker, Jazz Pianist, plays the piano, drums, and B3 Hammond Organ. He recently graduated from Hamilton High School Academy of Music, where he was a member of the Jazz Ensemble A, Jazz Combo A, Vocal Jazz Ensemble, and The Musical Theater Department. While at Hamilton, he received awards at local and regional jazz festivals for instrumental improvisation. He also received the most Outstanding Vocal Soloist Award at the Monterey and Reno Jazz Festivals. At the Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival in April 2011, The Hamilton Jazz Combo A group won First Place and was awarded the opportunity to play at the Monterey Jazz Festival in September 2011. In addition to music, Princeton is a licensed minister and a public speaker. Princeton also writes a weekly blog for the Huffington Post, Black Students Edition, and he will be a freshman at the University of Southern California in the spring of 2012, where he will major in Communications.



Marcus Paul, Jazz Trumpeter, has just finished his first semester as a freshman at the USC Thornton School of Music with a 3.8 grade point average! He has performed twice this semester, once with the Darek Oles Combo, and once with the Concert Jazz Orchestra, which was a tribute to Duke Ellington's music, where he received outstanding recognition from both the faculty and students. Marcus was also a 3rd Place Tie winner of the Georgia Laster NANM's Scholarship Competition in May, 2009.



Saila Reyes, Classical Violinist, is a senior at the Los Angeles County High School of the Arts (LACHSA), where she is the principal of the 2nd strings section in the high school orchestra. Saila is the Silver Medalist in the (July) 2008 NAACP ACT-SO Competition in the Classical Instrumental Music category. She currently studies violin with Henry Gronnier and has recorded with musical legend Alice Coltrane; as a soloist; and has performed in such venues as the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and NJPAC. Saila also aspires to become a writer and an actress.



Jonathan Richards, Jazz & Classical Bassist, Jazz and Classical Bassist, graduated May 2011 from USC's Thornton School of Music with a Bachelor of Music Degree, where he studied classical and jazz bass with John Clayton and Nico Abondolo. In the past, he has won honors from The Music Center's Spotlight Awards, the Dolo Coker Foundation, the Georgia Laster NANM Foundation, the BEEM Foundation, the NAACP ACT-SO Scholarship Competitions, and the Essentially Ellington Competition. Jonathan performs regularly at the Catalina Bar and Grill, The Jazz Bakery, The Blue Whale, and the House of Blues. He has made appearances at The Monterey Jazz Festival, the Dorothy Chandler Music Center, and the Walt Disney Concert Hall. He has also performed in Las Vegas at the Cosmopolitan and Mandalay Bay Hotels. He has been seen on the TV Series, Kendra, and ABC Pilot Lime Light, Gilmore Girls, and NBC's Chuck. Since his graduation, Jonathan has shared the stage with Jazz Artists Eric Reed, Terell Stafford, Barbara Morrison, Alan Harris, and others. He has also performed at the Crenshaw United Methodist Church's Sunday Services. Jonathan keeps busy teaching and studio recording. He plans to pursue a professional career in music, while continuing to perform and compose music.



Vivian Ridgway, Vocalist, is a junior at the Orange County High School for the Arts, (OCHSA). Winner in the Georgia Laster May 2011 Scholarship Competition She recently performed in the musical, "Once on This Island," and played the lead role of Mama Eruralie at her school. Vivian also sings classical, jazz, pop, and rhythm and blues. This fall, she was in the cast of "Les Miserables" at OCHSA. In addition, Vivian sings in her church youth choir and enjoys interacting with other young talented people. Vivian was our Third Place



Amira Bennett, Classical Violist, is a sophomore at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University of Long Beach and is a candidate for the Bachelor of Arts Music Degree in Viola Performance. She is Principal Violist of the Collegium Museum Chamber Orchestra at the Conservatory, Winner of the 2011 George Pelling Music Scholarship Competition, A Cole Scholar, and is on the Fall 2011 President's Scholar List at CSU, Long Beach. In the summer of 2011, Amira auditioned for and received a violin from the Maestro Foundation, which lends stringed instruments to gifted young musicians in this country. This summer, Amira was Principal Violist with the Inner City Youth Orchestra, and performed at a fundraising Luncheon for First Lady Michelle Obama, as well as for the Unveiling of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Event, In Washington D.C., hosted by the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.



Otto Ehling, Jazz and Classical Pianist, and Composer, graduated from University of Nevada, Los Vegas, in 2010, with a double major in Classical and Jazz Performance on a full scholarship. He will receive his Masters in Spring 2012 at the same university. At age six, he was the youngest student ever awarded an elementary school piano scholarship. At age ten, he was selected city wide to play Beethoven at the Greek Theater, "Youth at the Greek" in Los Angeles. During his high school freshman year, Otto won First Place in the NAACP ACT-SO National Competition Classical Division, under the Long Beach Chapter. He is a former First Place Georgia Laster NANM Scholarship Winner, and a former First Place BEEM Scholarship Winner. He also won First Place in the College Division in the NANM National Competition. At his university he has won First Place in the National Reno Jazz Festival College Division with UNLV's Liberace Combo, and First Place in the Concerto Competition playing Rachmaninoff's 2nd Concerto. As a member of the university's Liberace Combo, his group won First Place two years in a row, and Second Place two years ago. Otto has also received The Outstanding Soloist Award, beating out all his competitors in 17 different college combos. He has played for Gladys Knight, Wayne Newton, Chris Potter, Gerald Wilson, Anthon E. Zuiker, (creator of the CSI TV series), Bob Shepard, Peter Erskine, and many more. In spring 2011, Otto played at the Flamingo Library with the Liberace Quartet, where he performed some of his own compositions. In 2010, he was featured on the radio with the Liberace Quartet at KNPR. He has performed with Cristian Castro in the Latin Grammys at the Mandalay Bay, and he

continues to perform in and around Las Vegas. Otto enjoys performing classical, jazz, and musical theater music. In addition to his love for performing, he composes modern jazz styles tunes.



Marcus Paul, a Jazz Trumpeter, graduated from The Hamilton High School Academy of Music, where he majored in Instrumental Jazz, as well as Vocal Jazz, with a 3.875 GPA. At Hamilton, he performed with The Jazz Ensemble “A,” The Vocal Jazz Ensemble,” “Classical Ensembles,” and “Orchestras for Musical Theater Performances. He won Outstanding Soloist Awards at the Irvine Jazz Festival, Western States Jazz Festival, Reno Jazz Festival, and The Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival. He also performed at The Walt Disney Concert Hall, The Kodak Theatre, and The Jazz Bakery. Marcus will attend the USC Thornton School of Music this fall, majoring in Jazz Studies, with a minor in biochemistry or Botany.



David Burton, a Classical Pianist, will be a junior at Harvard Westlake High School in the fall, with a 3.65 GPA. He desires to become versatile at playing classical and jazz music, and eventually composing his own music. He also performed multiple music arrangements at Scott United Methodists Men’s Music Jamboree along with many other piano students from Pasadena. He is still contemplating what he wants to pursue in college, but his main interests are in law, with emphasis on mergers and acquisitions, and music education, with emphasis on music theory/composition. David has a 3.65 grade point average.



Shamen Balasooriya, Flautist, has been playing the flute for about 12 years. Shamen participated in numerous ensembles including The Orchestra da Camera of the Colburn School, Jazz America, Latin Sounds Initiative All Stars Band, Colburn Children’s Choir, the Colburn Jazz Ensemble, and many more. In 2005, Shamen won 2nd Place in the NANM National Winds Competition in Detroit, 2nd Place in the Charles Dolo Coker Competition, and 1st Place in the NANM Local Competition. She recently received her Bachelor of Music Degree in Flute Performance at California State University, Los Angeles. Shamen plans to become a successful flautist as well as a medical provider, and wishes to pursue a Master’s Degree in Music Therapy.



Marvin Brown King, Classical Pianist, is a college sophomore at West Los Angeles College, majoring in music, and plans to transfer to USC. He is a past 1st Place winner in the Georgia Laster NANM Competition. Some of Marvin’s recent performance events have included the Los Angeles NAACP’s 100 Year Gala, the Toigo Foundation Gala, where he was featured along with Sheila E. Patti Austin, Rashaan Patterson, Dan Rather, and Cedric The Entertainer, and other private events. Marvin’s faith in God and family allow him to push forward with his dream to become a renowned classical pianist.

Additional names of previous and current students will be added to this list on a regular basis.