Arianna String Quartet
In Cape Town and Pretoria, South Africa
May 9-19, 2011

OUTREACH AND CONCERT
TOUR REPORT

University of Missouri - St. Louis
In collaboration with University of Western Cape
Made possible by the generous support of the
University of Missouri South African Education
Partnership
Arianna String Quartet
South Africa Tour
University of Missouri South African Education Program
May 9-18, 2011

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OVERVIEW

The recent exchange between the University of Missouri - St. Louis faculty (UMSL), the Arianna String Quartet (ASQ), and the University of Western Cape (UWC) marked the 25th Anniversary of the University of Missouri South African Education Program (UMSAEP). As ambassadors of UMSL and the University of Missouri System, the ASQ’s collaborative efforts with University of Western Cape, Cape Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO), Cape Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (CPYO), Stellenbosch University, Cape Town Concert Series, and the University of South Africa in Pretoria (Unisa), celebrated the efforts of this long-standing, historic and acclaimed partnership.

Our initial contact was Jan Persens, director of International Relations at UWC. He works regularly with Joel Glassman, UMSL Director of the Center for International Studies, and Rod Uphoff, the UM Director of the UMSAEP and UM-Columbia Law School faculty. Professor Persens was elated and enthusiastic to host the Arianna Quartet for this 25th Anniversary. I also contacted Henriette Weber, the then educational outreach director for the CPO and CPYO. She was particularly eager to host the Arianna Quartet for a week of master classes, rehearsals and a concert with the Cape Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. Ms. Weber began a Suzuki Violin Program in a number of the surrounding townships, offering those communities a much-needed outlet for children with extremely limited opportunities. The Arianna Quartet was privileged to visit a couple of these townships and to observe and participate in the Suzuki violin classes. We witnessed some of the finest teaching and enthusiastic learning and left feeling humbled and inspired.

Ms. Weber arranged our itinerary during the first week of our visit in Cape Town. Monday through Thursday, 5/9-13, the Arianna Quartet led the CPYO in string orchestra rehearsals of Handel Concerto Grosso Op. 6, No. 5 and the Holberg Suite. We worked with the musicians on phrasing and variety in their playing, both in sound and energy. Henriette Weber commented after the first rehearsal that she had never seen the students
with such rapt attention nor so happy during a rehearsal. It was clear that the students were hungry for information and ready to learn.

In the mornings, the quartet rehearsed at the B&B where we stayed. The Verona Lodge is one that Ms. Weber uses often to host guests. The CPYO coordinated with our concert presenters to host us at the same B&B, making our stay very comfortable and hassle-free. Our afternoons were spent giving lessons and master classes, and visiting two townships, shanty communities where the children have limited opportunities and resources to say the least. In 2009 Ms. Weber initiated the Masidlale String Project in the townships of Gugulethu and Nyanga to provide children in these areas the opportunity to learn violin using the Suzuki Method. The children participating in these programs glow with pride and excitement for the new skills they have, the beauty they are having fun creating and a new way of expressing themselves.

The following outlines the rest of our week in South Africa:

Friday, 5/13: Travel to Stellenbosch University to perform that evening on the Endler Concert Series. Return to Cape Town.

Saturday, 5/14: Brunch with Professor Jan Persens, his family and staff, at the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden. Performance that evening on the Cape Town Concert Series

Sunday, 5/15: Dress Rehearsal and Performance with the CPYO. The Arianna Quartet opened the concert with a performance of Beethoven Op. 18, No. 2, then joined the CPYO as section leaders under the direction of Alexander Fokkens for the final performance of the Handel Concerto Grosso and Holberg Suite. Members of the CPO joined the sections as well.
Monday, 5/16: We had the entire day to enjoy a tour of the cape. Ms. Weber drove us around the tip of the Western Cape to enjoy an afternoon of markets, breathtaking vistas of the oceans, a walk among penguins, and sneaking snapshots of baboons!

Our visit to Cape Town culminated Monday evening in a concert and presentation honoring the alumni of the UM/UWC Partnership. Live and pre-recorded speeches were presented by the UWC Rector, Dr. Brian O’Connell, UMSL Director of Center for International Studies, Joel Glassman, Rod Uphoff, and UM faculty alums of the exchange program. The Arianna Quartet performed the Brahms Piano Quintet with UWC piano faculty, Pieter Van Zyl.

Tuesday, May 16: We flew to Pretoria and were met by a staff member from the University of South Africa. He drove us to our accommodations, the Jensen Safari Lodge. The owner of the lodge has had his successful safari business for over 30 years.

Wednesday, May 17: The Arianna Quartet performed at UNISA Performing Arts Hall. After, we enjoyed dinner with the John Roos, the Director of the Unisa Foundation.

Thursday, May 18: The quartet enjoyed a half-day safari led by Mr. Jensen and his staff. This was the perfect ending to a life-changing trip. Depart for the U.S.

Our exchange with UWC was hugely rewarding, as it was an enriching experience for all of the collaborating parties. Our recent collaboration evolved into more than we could ever imagine. Because of our work with the Youth Orchestra, plans are already underway to begin a string quartet program at UWC. Ms. Weber has formed two string quartets from the advanced students in the CPYO and the surrounding universities. The quartets have started working together, given repertoire suggested by the ASQ. The hope is that at least one of these quartets will participate in the FEMUSC Intensive String Quartet Program with the Arianna Quartet in January.
2012. The ASQ is committed to helping the fledgling quartets; in the fall we will begin regular coachings via videoconference.

In addition, Henriette Weber is submitting a proposal for the ASQ to conduct a 3-week chamber music course in UWC. Her long-term goal is to reinstate a music program at UWC.

The visit to South Africa was fulfilling and inspiring to us. We were honored to take part in the long-standing exchange with UWC, the UM system’s primary partner in South Africa.

Submitted by Joanna Mendoza
Arianna String Quartet and Cape Philharmonic Youth Orchestra

The Arianna String Quartet had the pleasure of working with the Cape Philharmonic Youth Orchestra string section throughout five two hour rehearsals, culminating in a public performance at the University of the Western Cape on May 15th, 2011. This educational residency was a central feature of our visit to South Africa.

We were able to introduce to these students a new style of working that they will be able to apply to any future chamber music or orchestral setting, one that can quickly bring them closer to a professional level of performance, and allow them to become more highly valued members of their future ensembles.

It should be noted here with much appreciation that the students had been expertly prepared for our visit by their fine conductor, Alexander Fokkens, and with professional help from several volunteers, members of the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra. At the first rehearsal with the Arianna Quartet members, the students could play through all of their music accurately and at a high level relative to other ensembles their age. Without the vision and dedication of the artistic and administrative staff of the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra, the students would never have achieved the level of excellence in evidence at the performance.

Our basic goal throughout was to work with the students to allow them to play their orchestral music expertly without a conductor. This requires a different level of individual responsibility and musical involvement more closely associated with chamber music, but playing in this way is also an essential characteristic of the world’s finest orchestras.

When there is a conductor present, many less experienced students can abandon their own musical instincts. Orchestras can become similar to a passive classroom situation in which students expect the teacher to tell them everything they need to do, rather than becoming an active partnership among musicians. The students can forget to ask themselves the essential questions that keep them involved as musicians: what is the musical character and what does it mean to me, who has the theme/what does my part contribute, how long is the phrase and where is the highpoint, who am I with and how can we sound more like we are playing with one voice, etc. Questions like these provide the foundation for a spirit of musical inquiry that leads young musicians inevitably forward toward a deeper personal relationship with the music.
By teaching the students to ask and answer these questions for themselves we have found that they become personally invested in the expressive goal of the composer, feel better about their membership in the ensemble, and begin to contribute real musical content to the rehearsals and performances. We teach them how to actively care for the texture at every moment and to play with an awareness of the potential for beauty in each note. This awareness can be transformative for young musicians.

The conductor, thus relieved of the burden to create all the energy in the room, is then free to help the students refine these musical efforts, inspire them to greater heights, and to focus the students' knowledge and energy to achieve his/her expressive goals.

To all of our ideas and new rehearsal techniques, the students responded with great enthusiasm and remarkable concentration. The conductor, Alex Fokkens was also an enthusiastic supporter of this process and contributed greatly to the success of this project.

The Arianna String Quartet's experience with the Cape Philharmonic Youth Orchestra strings was a very rewarding experience for us, and we would certainly embrace any future opportunities to work with these dedicated, energetic, and talented young string students.

Submitted by John McGrosso
Arianna Quartet:  
South Africa Cultural Exchange Project

As part of the Arianna Quartet’s shared mission with the University of Missouri-St. Louis of excellence in education and performance, the ASQ was proud to perform five concerts in ten days while in South Africa recently. The Arianna's five-day residency with the Cape Town Philharmonic Youth Orchestra was enhanced by two concerts the ASQ gave at the University of the Western Cape, as well as concerts on high profile chamber music series’ in Cape Town, as well as at Stellenbosch University, and at the University of South Africa, in Pretoria. These important concerts were extremely well received and well attended, and gave the Arianna Quartet the opportunity to represent the University of Missouri-St. Louis on the highest artistic level. Our concerts also opened many conversations with attending public, music educators and students about the UMSL music department’s string area, as well as our fine vocal, and wind and brass areas. The Arianna Quartet received immediate offers for re-engagements on each concert series, and looks forward to augmenting the visibility of UM-St. Louis in South Africa by adding additional venues to our next visit.

One of the most important aspects of our educational work in South Africa was the connection we were able to make with students and teachers showing the link between the technical and musical suggestions we made in lessons, master classes and rehearsals, and the practical application of these techniques in concert. Student musicians from the Cape Town Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, as well as faculty members from each of the three universities we visited attended our concerts and commented on the effectiveness of this aspect of our educational work. As part of our work as educators, it is part of the mission of the Arianna Quartet, both as individuals and as an ensemble, to inspire creative teaching and learning through effectively demonstrating the fusion of the performance and music education techniques we use in our own artistic process. Our concerts represented the culmination of this work, and afforded us the important opportunity of demonstrating an end product in our working process.

We left South Africa feeling as if we had made investments in multiple communities on several levels, with students, educators and the public, and were extremely pleased that so many people appreciated our concert performances. At each concert, we were delighted to serve as ambassadors of the University of Missouri-St.
Louis, and to represent, in our own small way, the excellent work that is being done on all fronts by the faculty in our department of music and our university as a whole.

Submitted by Kurt Baldwin

**ARTICLE : ARIANNA STRING QUARTET**

**ARIANNA STRING QUARTET AT UWC**

On 15 May, the UWC Main Hall echoed to the sounds of Beethoven, Grieg and Handel. The Arianna String Quartet (ASQ) from the University of Missouri-St. Louis visited UWC to celebrate with us the 25th anniversary of the partnership agreement between UWC and the University Of Missouri.

Their stay started with daily rehearsals with the string section Cape Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (CPYO). This was a most exciting and enjoyable experience for these young musicians. These workshops and rehearsals culminated in the concert at the UWC Main Hall where the ASQ opened the first half with two pieces, giving the audience a unique experience of their virtuosity. In the second half the ASQ led the sections of the string orchestra comprising of the CPYO, members from the University of Stellenbosch Symphony Orchestra and some professional musicians from the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra. The UWC-UM partnership realised a dream for the CPYO as it was their first performance with a professional ensemble.

On 16 May, the Centre for the Performing Arts Recital Hall echoed to the sounds of Mozart and Brahms with our own Pieter van Zyl (piano) performing the Brahms Piano Quintet in F minor Op.34 with the Arianna String Quartet. This event was held for the UM-UWC alumni with congratulatory messages from Profs. Joel Glassman and Ron Uphoff from the UM. The Rector, on his return journey from receiving his Honorary Doctorate from the University of Missouri, had recorded a welcoming message to the quartet and an encouraging message with regard to the performing arts at UWC.

It was a great privilege for the UWC and broader Cape Town community to be able to work with a quartet of this calibre and we hope to continue this collaboration in building the music component at the Centre for the Performing Arts.

Henriette Weber
UWC Centre for the Performing Arts
Arianna String Quartet from the University of Missouri, St Louis.

Arianna String Quartet. CPYO, USSO, CPO.

An appreciative audience.
RECITAL: Arianna String Quartet  
VENUE: Enoch Sontonga Conference Complex  
DATE: Wednesday, 18 May 2011

The works covered in this ambitious programme covered a wide range of expression and exploited most of the textural possibilities which this particular combination exacts.

In the face of this challenge the Arianna String Quartet (John McGrosso and David Gillham - violins; Joanna Mendoza - viola; Kurt Baldwin - cello) plumbed artistic depths and sustained an incredible level of execution. They were powerfully communicative.

In terms of generous tone the quartet had much to offer in the opening piece, Beethoven's *String Quartet in G Major, Op 18, no 2*. Each partner produced quicksilver reactions, even playfulness as behooves this genre and they showed flowing deference to each other's contribution.

The players dug trenchantly into Ernst von Dohnányi's *String Quartet no 3*. Suffice to say that they provided a towering interpretation of music that on the surface may register as somewhat austere but exhilarating nonetheless. There was a moving rendition of the middle movement. The set of variations had the players in absolutely sparkling form. Theirs was wonderfully intuitive playing.

In Grieg's *String Quartet in G minor* there was an inordinate blend of emotional commitment and fluent virtuosity. The fiendish rhythmic and technical challenges were surmounted so completely that the music's inner core of poetic vision stood revealed with startling clarity. They realised the many subtleties of texture and tonal drama to the full.

RIEK VAN RENSBURG (Pretoria News)