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Odyssey Oracle

Special "Convergence" Edition

A Partnership with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

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Music Majesty Meets Our Class

Odyssey's Class of 2025 was delighted to welcome Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra's CEO, Joe Loehnis, to class along with Bill Banfield, composer and organizer of a five-year Musical Landscapes in Color project celebrating and recording the works of living Black composers. Joe and Bill were joined this year by Patrice Rushen and Andre Myers, who engaged with our students, shared their backgrounds, and discussed their musical compositions being performed the next night.

"Don't avoid the work" rang in my ears for days after composers Patrice Rushen and Andre Myers visited class. Their presence in the classroom was memorable and a pleasure, and their words of encouragement and resilience to reach our professional goals were inspirational. The way both Patrice Rushen and Andre Myers spoke about their passions radiated for generations to come. (**Angelica Alvarez**)

First of all, thank you so much for coming! It was so great to hear questions from my classmates and hear what amazing answers Patrice and Andre gave us. I loved Patrice's vibe. She never gave up, and she was okay with being "different" and not looking like the stereotypical "classical player." She was saying to believe in yourself and push the limits. **(Kyianna Baker)**

I was truly overjoyed to have had met those wonderful composers. They both individually had different ways of delivering their reasons and messages to us, which was similar to their style of composing.

I really felt Patrice's message in class about how everyone can learn music.

My overall thought about the class is what a joy to have been a part of history and meeting them all. **(Tiffany Brenston)**

What I learned from the visit is to present yourself and your questions if you have the opportunity and time and the resource of live opportunity. Ask while you have the opportunity to ask. Believe in yourself. **(Quanna Caffey)**

First, I would like to say thank you two for coming out with us. I didn't get a chance to ask some questions: What ages did you get into music? What made you take that route? Did it run in the family? Can you mix music and acting together? **(Eleanor Ceaser)**

One of the first things I noticed was the incredible passion that each one of the speakers had about their upcoming concert. It became obvious almost right away how important and influential music was to each person and their life. They also did an amazing job at describing how music is often a reflection of the times and circumstances, as well as breaking down how throughout history music has been an evolution and adaptation from generation to generation.

Lastly one of the things I took away was how each person kinda had their own individual and unique relationship with music. They all had this overwhelming love for music, but each person seemed to focus their interest on different aspects of what all brings a symphony together. Which after reflecting on it was pretty cool because I thought it tied into the theme of the concert they were about to perform, that being convergence. Each individual brought a little something different to the table given their life experience and

interpretation of music, but by each person coming together as a group with the desire to create a beautiful performance, they were able to use each different perspective as a strength instead of a weakness to ultimately create the Convergence concert. By them coming together with a common goal, they were influenced by each other and ended up "merging together," like the meaning of the concert itself. **(Dillon Dahlk)**

What I took away from the visit is how important music is to the composers. I believe that music is their life, it's what they love to do. Music is a way of expressing themselves and teaching others. I have a better understanding of orchestra music and a certain respect for it now. I am interested in listening to more orchestra music now. **(Gela Docks)**

I am an avid music lover – hours of playlists, many of concerts conquered, but I never stopped to think of the writing and composing aspect, especially in the more classical sense. My brother was talking about things he would imagine/pictures he'd see in his mind's eye while listening to the music being played. The composers coming opened me to a new genre and a new understanding of the birth of a song from mind to audience. **(Brianna Espanol)**

Our visitors on October 9th were very amazingly talented people, and it was an honor to be in their presence. It was very inspiring to hear about their musical backgrounds and all the beautiful music that they are a part of. **(Adrianne Farrow)**

I liked the idea that everything about them was music. When they talked, when they walked, you felt the importance of music. I never gave an orchestra any thought until that day. They soaked up our questions and spit out answers in melodies we could understand. (**Jamal Jackson**)

I enjoyed listening to them talk about their passions. It's inspiring to see people that look like you doing big things and sharing what they've learned. I do wish I had gotten better answers to my questions. **(Aaniyah Jefferson)**

Some things that I got out of the visit with the composers is that practice makes perfect and if you want something you have to be able and want to learn things that you may or may not believe in. In order to become successful, you have to be willing to learn! **(Mariya Lucas)**

Bill Banfield and Joe Loehnis's visit was a great one, and we also got to sit with two composers, Andre Myers and Patrice Rushen, as they enlightened us about their music and how it would be featured in the "Convergence" concert. The fact that they were able to share musical insights, experiences, and stories of how far they have come was inspiring. Thank you all for sharing your stories with us. (**Alfusainey Manjang**)

Thank you for your inspiring visit to our class. To have a passion for your jobs and what you do in life is truly motivating. Music is a gift to us all. Overcoming the obstacles in our lives is why we're all here. **(Vanessa Martinez)**

Thank you for enlightening us on orchestras and talking with us. I was entertained from start to finish and hope that someday I too can work in a field that does not feel like working. **(Alexus McClain)**

I enjoyed the visit from our guests. I appreciated that they spoke to us of hard work and education. It was validating to hear them share that we can all do hard things. (**Mickey Mestiza**)

I did not know much about orchestras. Them coming to class and me attending the concert gave me so much insight. Them coming to class to give insight on their pieces was such a pleasure. Thank you all again for the great experience. (**Val Mosely**)

I was very honored to be in the same room as Patrice Rushen after learning who she is and what she's done in the music industry as far as teaching artists I listen to. Patrice and Andre had great motivational points that stuck with me. **(Daija Pigram)**

I think it's really cool that both composers have different stories and all they've been through. I love that it was pushed that everybody could learn music. I agree that it's important to learn your learning style. **(Lailani Reed)**

Out of this visit I got that you can be anything you wanna be in life as long as you put your mind to it. There are a lot of resources out there so use them. Back then schooling was harder than it is now. Music can definitely heal you and motivate you as well. Working in a team isn't always a bad thing. Sometimes you have to start small and work your way up. **(Tiana Richmond-Lee)**

I really enjoyed listening to the composers' backgrounds and knowledge. One thing that really stuck out for me is when Andre Myers said that first he takes care of himself, then family and friends. Making sure that he gets the proper amount of rest and eats right ensures that he will be the best that he can be and that if he isn't good to and for himself that he will be no good to and for anyone else. **(Ashli Smith)**

First, I want to start by saying thank you!! Thank you for taking time out of your day to come and see us and fill our heads with amazing knowledge. I learned that music touches everyone. I learned that my favorite artist listened to an artist that moved them, and that artist listened to an artist that moved them, and so onnnn... **(Corrie Thomas)**

I really enjoyed our visit, as well as my trip to watch the performance. I learned so much about the creative process. I am looking forward to using what I've learned to create my own works of art. Thank you! **(Dan Thomas)**

I liked both of their energy, and you could tell they had a lot of knowledge and wisdom to offer. They spoke with much intelligence. I like that they were happy to be here and were interested in us and our questions. They made me drawn to come and hear pieces of music after hearing what they had to say. **(Janessa Weichmann)**

I enjoyed their visit, especially the conversation about how music can be anything and how music has power. **(Abby Wilson)**

When Patrice and Andre spoke to our class, I was moved because when I think of the word composer I think of old white men and Patrice and Andre are of color and Patrice is a woman. With that being said, I have a new image in my head of a composer now! I also loved the fact that they started with music so long ago and have been in many rooms and make/made an impact in so many people's lives. **(Ladella Wilson)**

Patrice was sitting in our classroom telling us about how she got started. It's amazing to listen to the music she produces.

Andre Myers' story was also amazing. To hear the history about music really intrigues me to learn more about music and how. **(Sable Wright)**

Comments on the "Convergence" Concert

Current and past Odyssey students attended "Musical Landscapes in Color: Convergence," a Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra concert on October 10, 2024, at the Overture Center. Some shared a pizza dinner at Ian's before the concert, some attended a pre-show talk, all attended the performance, and some stayed later for a post-show party.

Responses from current students:

My son Noah and I are honored to have been guests and witnesses to such an exquisite musical concert. Musical Landscapes in Color Vol II- Convergence was an unforgettable experience for my family. Both my son and I enjoyed composer Michel Abels's compositions, and I felt calm yet uneasy (in a good way) while listening to Fanfare and Fantasies composed by Patrice Rushen. André Myer's "Changes" felt just like he mentioned in class on Wednesday, beauty in the silence. Composer Valerie Coleman's work was lovely to experience.

It was a privilege to have heard and seen such talents! Thank you to the generous community at Odyssey and a sincere thank you to Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra for a beautiful memory my family won't soon forget. A special heartfelt shout out to Maestro Andrew Sewell, who seemed to emanate the love for his work, and a thank you for inspiring my son to go further in his music dreams! A sincere prayer and thank you to Patrice Rushen. I have heard your work but naively never put a face to it. At the post-concert party, I had hoped to have spoken to Patrice Rushen: she is an astounding woman and her words in class changed me. I want to express my gratitude for such an amazing opportunity and the chance to give my son a core memory with me. We will not forget and I will strive to one day see my son on that same stage as a proud conductor like Maestro Sewell and leave his mark in history. "Gratitude is the greatest form of prayer." I am and will hold these memories with infinite gratitude to you all. (**Angelica Alvarez**)

Andre was mild themed at his concert. He based his piece on change, and you can hear that beautifully done in in his compositions that night at the Overture Center.

Patrice was just so loud, voiceful. (**Tiffany Brenston**)

I did attend the orchestra on Thursday night. I enjoyed all the pieces, but I enjoyed Patrice Rushen's piece the most: Fanfare and Fantasy, I believe. It gave me a different outlook on the orchestra. I understood everyone's music. I felt like I was at the movies or watching old cartoons. It was an overall enjoyable experience. I wouldn't have experienced without Odyssey. Thank you! (**Gela Docks**)

I had an amazing time at the concert. The music was beautifully played and directed. All of the music was exciting, surprising, and kept me on the edge of my seat. It was an amazing performance and I'm glad I got to see it. **(Adrianne Farrow)**

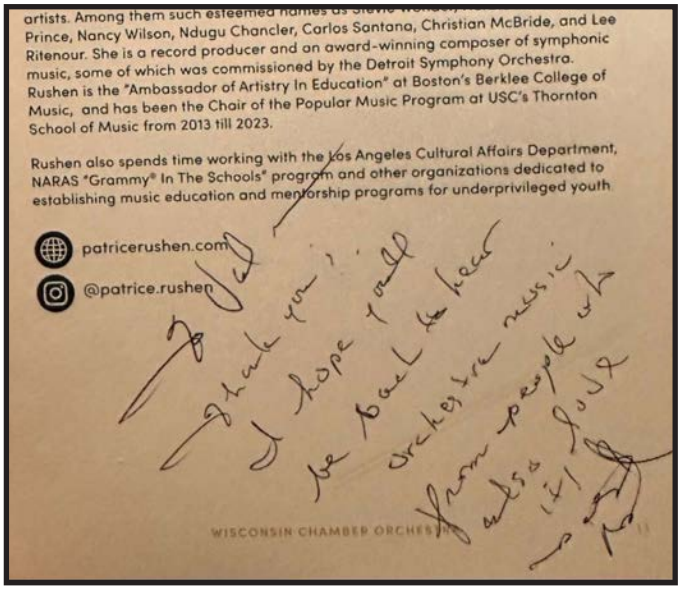
What I found greatly fascinating was the Thursday night concert I attended with someone so special and dear to my heart, my wife. It was a first-time experience for me. I had absolute fun and enjoyed every bit of my time at the concert. A great night indeed. It was a great experience and we both loved the music. The music was amazing! Thank you so much. (**Alfusainey Manjang**)

At the concert, I cried listening to Andre's piece. I was moved by the music. **(Mickey Mestiza)**

I would like to thank you all for the amazing event that was the first time me and my friend Shamirra ever attended an orchestra concert. We both thought it was great, a lot going on at once when trying to keep up with what instruments are being played. It felt as though we were watching a movie, like the music was talking to us that deep and the convergence was the movie. I loved that it was groups of different instruments and in every group the instruments were still kinda different as in a big tall small. I thought that was pretty cool.

I assumed after they came to our class that Patrice and Andre would perform or at least conduct their own pieces, but after attending the concert and seeing how big of a group it was with so many different instruments, it was amazing. Patrice's piece was so dominant and powerful without words. Michael Abels' piece made me feel free.

Here's a picture of the best highlight of the night: getting Ms. Patrice Rushen's autograph. She made me feel so special addressing it "To Val." It was supposed to be for my mom but now it's personally for me. Thank you all again for a really great opportunity greatly appreciated it. (**Val Mosely)**



artists. Among them such esteemed names as Stevie Wonder, Prince, Nancy Wilson, Ndugu Chancler, Carlos Santana, Christian McBride, and Lee Ritenour. She is a record producer and an award-winning composer of symphonic music, some of which was commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Rushen is the "Ambassador of Artistry In Education" at Boston's Berklee College of Music, and has been the Chair of the Popular Music Program at USC's Thornton School of Music from 2013 till 2023.

Rushen also spends time working with the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, NARAS "Grammy® In The Schools" program and other organizations dedicated to establishing music education and mentorship programs for underprivileged youth.

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To Val
Thank you!
I hope you
love to hear
orchestra music
from people of
all ages
(x)

WISCONSIN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

My son and I had a great time. He'll be starting his strings program with his school next year and I can tell he is excited to start. He also wants to join the music class with Odyssey to learn the piano after hearing the orchestra. I was very moved by the music played; the fourth song was my favorite. I actually shed a few tears listening! I've been meaning to go to an orchestra since graduating high school and leaving my school's band and was glad to have to opportunity to go last night. I really enjoyed listening to the concert. It was an awesome experience. Thank you for this wonderful experience! **(Daija Pigram)**

I attended the concert and really enjoyed all of it. I was amazing to see the different breakdowns when it came to the instruments. I loved how Andre really did give you the vision of someone sitting and searching for a piece of mind. **(Ladella Wilson)**

The concert was beautiful with the different instruments. You could hear the different beats from each note that was played. You could hear all types of beats like happy, sad, scary, dangerous, calm, and peaceful music depending on the song. For instance, like a drama movie the music is more intense. When you put it all together it is sweet mellow music.

Music helps me with whatever mood I am in. Especially gospel music. It puts me in a beautiful place and everything looks bright and happy. Then there's R&B music, which sends me to another place and space. It just depends on what type of music a person likes to affect their mood. Love songs hit differently to people as well. This is what I enjoyed about the concert. The concert was very good. The different music and the sounds that each instrument makes come together to make beautiful melodies. **(Sable Wright)**

Responses from Odyssey alumni:

The WCO event featuring Black composers was phenomenal. The music just flowed into a beautiful Odyssey! A special thank you to the community of people that have invested in our new musical composition. (**Char Braxton**)

Marquita and I both enjoyed the concert. We enjoyed ourselves to the fullest. We were very happy to notice it was a woman composer. It was the very first time for us to ever have done something like that. We both enjoyed the selected music choices and we felt like it was very relaxing. Overall, it was very nice. Thanks! (**Latrice White**)

We really enjoyed the concert. It was a great concert to enjoy. The music of color was very relaxing and it was a wonderful experience to see the orchestra doing a live concert recording. Amazing and wonderful. Thank You. (**Tyrone Ozea Hudson Sr.)**

I totally enjoyed all of Musical Landscapes in Color, Vol II. I have come to appreciate all types of music. The Odyssey program has given me access to see, hear, and feel experiences that widen our perceptions of everything. I'm only beginning to develop an understanding of symphony and it differs from the traditional music that I grew up with and listened to. As an adult, I'm starting to appreciate the music.

This opportunity to see and hear the composers live in a small room (before the concert) was an incredible experience that my grandson and I will talk about and share for quite some time. To listen to the stories people who look like me and my grandson, to hear how they came to write and compose, to hear the story of some of their journeys on their roads to become composers made their symphonies more personal, more relatable, more inviting to me, and I was able to help my grandson find commonalities too! As my grandson and I found connections to the composers through their stories, it was easier to want to understand and listen and appreciate the beautiful music with anticipation, excitement, and enthusiasm.

It allowed me to be lifted up and swept away by the beauty of the music. For me the difference in listening to the fusion of the orchestra music with the familiarity of the soul music and beauty of the married melodies I found totally enchanting from beginning to the end. I intend to listen to educate myself more and develop better musical understanding and appreciation because of this wonderfully enlightening experience.

My grandson loves math and wants to be an engineer. During intermission one of the gentlemen walked up to us and introduced himself and shared his reason about his passion and my grandson related to him through that. We also talked about notes in music and symbols and letters in math and how when each are paired in certain forms melodies are made. (**Bruce Moore**)

I was invited by Bruce Moore to attend the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra concert featuring music composed by four brilliant composers. I learned a lot about these four during the pre-concert discussion and from that, I was hooked.

Studying music in college myself, and knowing the difficulties of writing music for piano, I applaud all four of these composers for writing pieces for an entire orchestra. The immense talent it takes to do this is incredible.

Music knows no racism, nor does it care about a person's background or upbringing. That is its beauty. It is to be written by and listened to by anyone, regardless. These four composers showed us that through their music that evening.

It was an honor to be invited to this event and witness their talent. Thank you. (**Olivia Sturdevant, friend of Bruce Moore**)

This was a great experience. The second time I have gone to this orchestra. Thank you so much for this opportunity and thank you so much for allowing the Odyssey Students and Alumni to join this experience. I slept like a baby that night. Like carefree living, I love it! God bless you and have a wonderful rest of the year! (**Dana Stokes**)