



## Musicians with a Mission: Keeping the Classical Tradition Alive

By Andrew L. Pincus

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**Musicians with a Mission: Keeping the Classical Tradition Alive** By Andrew L. Pincus

This work profiles six remarkable artists - cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Midori, singer Phyllis Curtin, the Julliard String Quartet, composer Gunther Schuller and conductor Robert Spano - who have advanced American musical culture through their spirited support of new repertoire, new artists and new ideas. While the musicians featured here followed different paths, they share a common goal: to constantly refresh an art form endangered by ossification, commercialization and inadequate public support and funding. Whether the means is performance and commissioning of new music, teaching, publishing, advocacy or innovations in programming, these devoted artists have extended themselves far beyond stardom or conventional careers to strengthen and enrich the world of music. Pincus draws on interviews with his subjects and on his several years experience as a journalist covering Tanglewood. He show how the artist has been and continues to be a vital force in shaping the course of music and highlights other musicians or ensembles that are carrying on the ideals of their mentors.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Pincus (Tanglewood), a classical music critic for the Berkshire Eagle in Pittsfield, Mass., and a two-time winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for excellence in music criticism, profiles six names in the classical music world: cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Midori, singer Phyllis Curtin, the Juilliard String Quartet, composer Gunther Schuller and conductor Robert Spano. What they all have in common is their commitment to supporting and energizing American music culture, whether by introducing audiences to new repertoires or playing a role in education or advocacy. Phyllis Curtin, an American soprano and educator whose opera career was destroyed in the 1960s by an aggressively climbing juggernaut named Beverly Sills, inspired a generation of students to explore contemporary music and resist the increasing homogenization and professionalization of opera performance. Midori discusses the foundation she started to bring musicians to New York City public schools. Schuller, a horn player and maverick conductor as well as a composer, recalls a career spent championing little-known contemporary composers. Pincus has an eye for intimate detail, and though his profiles are focused on the subjects' careers, he manages to convey much about each musician's temperament and about the cloistered, gossipy classical music world with which he is affectionately obsessed. The portraits will please readers interested in classical music and are refreshingly optimistic in tone. Pincus's passion for the subject is contagious.

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From Library Journal

Classical music critic Pincus (Tanglewood: The Clash Between Tradition and Change) has written a captivating study of the lives and careers of six influential musicians or musical groups: cellist Yo-Yo Ma, singer Phyllis Curtin, composer/conductor Gunther Schuller, conductor Robert Spano, the Juilliard String Quartet, and violinist Midori. Beyond their international renown as performers, each has been influential in advancing the status and renewal of the classical music tradition through teaching, conducting, and involvement in education. Pincus, who has worked for several years as a journalist at Tanglewood and has contributed to the New York Times and other publications, writes with an engaging style and composes fascinating portraits of these artists. He devotes a chapter to each artist, allowing the reader to see their incredible accomplishments in the context of their life's work. Biographical accounts are interwoven with interviews and narrative accounts of teaching, master classes, and humanitarian work. This book should be appreciated by scholars and amateurs alike. Recommended. Lori-Anne Dolloff, Univ. of Toronto

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From [Booklist](#)

Keeping classical music alive is the theme uniting Pincus' six sketches on musicians who are trying to do so. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma connects with audiences in any way he can to bring the classical tradition to contemporary people. Soprano Phyllis Curtin commissioned and performed songs inspired by classic poetry and now teaches new singers the art of interpretation and modern singing technique. Conductor Gunther Schuller brings meritorious new compositions to caring and skeptical audiences and helps them hear their beauty. Conductor Robert Spano delves deeply in new music to find the best of it and interpret it collaboratively with the orchestras he directs. The Juilliard String Quartet mixes high-energy interpretations of nineteenth-century works and stunning performances of twentieth-century quartets in its concerts. Violinist Midori puts instrumental training back into public schools with the support of her foundation for that purpose. These and other musicians labor "for the renewal of an art form endangered by ossification on the one side and commercialization on the other," and Pincus engages us in the practical realities of their work. *Alan Hirsch*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Martina Joseph:**

The actual book *Musicians with a Mission: Keeping the Classical Tradition Alive* will bring someone to the new experience of reading a new book. The author style to clarify the idea is very unique. In case you try to find new book to read, this book very appropriate to you. The book *Musicians with a Mission: Keeping the Classical Tradition Alive* is much recommended to you to read. You can also get the e-book from official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

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