



SPORTS

Alabama's \$100K high school coaches

HOOVER

American Family Care's growth only just begun

Company shows no signs of slowing march to becoming national brand.

AMY YURKANIN
AYURKANIN@AL.COM

Bruce Irvin found opportunity in an unlikely place — the waiting room of Brookwood Medical Center, where he worked as an emergency room physician.

It was often filled with "Gomers," doctor-slang for patients in emergency departments who don't need emergency services.

"It means, 'Get out of my ER,'" Irvin said. If they got out of the ER, where were they going to go? They

needed a doctor's office with extended hours and easy access, Irvin said.

Irvin opened Emergency Medicine South in Hoover, which offered health care to walk-in patients from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The hours changed, and so did the name. The company later became American Family Care, which now operates 143 clinics in 26 states and is one of the largest privately held

chains of urgent care clinics in the country.

In Alabama, the company has clinics in Birmingham, Dothan, Tuscaloosa, Mobile, Huntsville, Montgomery, Auburn and Gadsden.

Irvin runs the company, but no longer practices medicine. He surrendered his license in 2004.

Executives officially opened the new headquarters Thursday on

Cahaba Beach Road. The swanky facility sits back from the road on a forested lot. Everything from the illuminated reception desk to the carpet on the floor bears a double-helix design inspired by DNA. A collage of tiny photographs of current and former employees comes together to form the company's logo behind the main desk.

BRAND, Page 5

ALABAMA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Hillary Tidman, above and center right, is assistant principal/second flute with the Alabama Symphony and the orchestra's youngest member at 22 years old. (Tamika Moore/tnmoore@al.com)

Youth taking center stage

As 38-year-old musical director Carlos Izcaray takes the baton, the ASO cultivates young musicians and classical music fans.

CARLA JEAN WHITLEY
CWHITLEY@AL.COM

Take a look around during an Alabama Symphony Orchestra Masterworks series performance — or a similar show by any American orchestra — and you're likely to see a room filled with refined, middle-age to elderly music fans. Sure, you'll spot an occasional younger couple, or a grandchild in tow for an educational excursion. But the affluent, gray-haired set fills the Alys Stephens Center seats.

If the ASO has its way, that could

soon change.

The orchestra has long included diverse programming, with pops concerts attracting contemporary music fans, the Classical Edge series pairing the ASO with indie rock bands and youth programs introducing students to classical music. That's an attempt to beat the national trend of shrinking audiences for live classical music. Those declines don't only relate to young people — although each generation represents a smaller audience than its predecessor, audience participation within each generation declines with age, according to 2009 research

by the League of American Orchestras. If trends continue at that pace, symphony orchestras would see a 14 percent audience decline by 2018.

Come this fall, 38-year-old Carlos Izcaray will take center stage as music director. Simultaneously, the ASO will relaunch its junior patrons group, bringing the organization to a crossroads.

One ASO volunteer compared Izcaray to the Beatles' George Harrison.

"He is pure passion. He's to the core of the art. He's humble.

SYMPHONY, Page 10

GAY MARRIAGE

Supreme Court ready for same-sex debate

Decision could decide legality of gay unions in Alabama, across US

KENT FAULK
KFAULK@AL.COM

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday will hear arguments that could help decide one and for all whether gay marriage is allowed nationwide — including Alabama.

While the four consolidated cases being considered by the justices regard the marriage laws from Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky and Tennessee, other states, individuals and groups from around the nation have been allowed to chime in with their concerns.

At least seven of the 145 amicus — or friend of the court — briefs filed with the U.S. Supreme Court include input from Alabamians regarding issues of family, states' rights and equality.

The governor and Alabama attorney general, U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Haleyville, a foundation led by the wife of the Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, and a Huntsville pediatrician, are among those involved in briefs asking the U.S. Supreme Court to affirm the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that upheld gay marriage bans in the four states.

The mayor of Tuskegee and a married lesbian couple from Vestavia Hills have also signed their names to briefs in support of those trying to reverse the appeal court decision.

What's at stake?

"Alabama has much at stake in the decision," Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange said in an email to AL.com this week.

COURT, Page 1

IN SUNDAY'S NEWS

Opinions differ on Gulf State Park Restoration Project plans
Voices debate the best use of BP oil spill funds. 13



Birmingham climber survives avalanche after earthquake
A 7.9 magnitude earthquake near Mt. Everest kills hundreds. 23

Weather: Mostly sunny. 81/53

Weather, Sports 8 Index, 2

GULF OIL SPILL: FIVE YEARS LATER



Dauphin Island's uninhabited west end offers spectacular scenes in the sands and marshes. (Sharon Steinmann/steinmann@al.com)

All along our coast, precarious futures loom for unprotected shores and wetlands. But by spending just a sliver of BP's fines, we can safeguard our last wild places once and for all.

PART FIVE

Editor's note: This is the last of a multipart series by Ben Raines, retelling the story of the BP oil spill as he experienced it and explaining how preservation is critical to the Gulf Coast.

BEN RAINES
FOR AL.COM

This is the moment of decision for Mobile Bay. Before us lies a choice. Either we permanently protect the last, large chunks of marsh, maritime forest and undisturbed sands left on the Alabama coast, or we don't.

We will never have this opportunity again. Alabama is broke. Too broke to ever protect these places on its own. But we have this once-in-a-lifetime windfall thanks to the BP oil spill.

Using just a fraction of that money, we'll ensure a thriving future for our coastal ecosystem. We cannot let inertia or quarreling ruin this chance.

These are our last wild places. If they fall to development or neglect, we lose not only their natural function, but the chance to see our coast as it was before we excavated it, paved it and poured concrete.

TREASURES, Page 18

ASO hopes young leaders will spark young fans

Symphony

Continued from Page 1

He's a gentleman. He's engaging. He's friendly. He's approachable. He's just like the guy next door," says ASO Director of Communications and Public Relations Debbie Bartoletti.

The ASO hopes this is its opportunity to fan a spark into a flame.

Who's there?

That would be music to the ears of someone like 22-year-old Hillary Tidman, who as the youngest member of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra could be the daughter or granddaughter of her audience.

When she's not on stage, donning all black to blend into the 50-some-member instrument that is the orchestra, Tidman can just as easily mingle in Birmingham's young professional scene. In her 20 months here, the Washington, D.C., native has taken to the city's craft breweries and hiking like so many of her counterparts.

It's the music that sets her apart.

Even in her free time, the assistant principal flautist prefers classical music. (She'll listen to the radio for a sense of what's hot, but admits she doesn't even know what station.) In contrast, some of her non-orchestra friends didn't realize Birmingham had an orchestra before meeting Tidman. A show with Wye Oak or The National's Bryce Dessner, both participants in this year's Classical Edge series, can be an entry point for those non-classically inclined friends.

The changing — or aging — demographics of symphony patrons reflect larger trends in an increasingly fragmented music industry, in which concert tickets account for a significant portion of music purchases, and young people spend more than their elders. That makes Tidman and her contemporaries one of the most desirable age groups of patrons for this and arts groups nationwide. Bartoletti says it is actively courting adults 40 and younger. They, along with empty nesters (a secondary target), tend to be open to and interested in Birmingham's city center evolution.

Who cares?

Tidman sits center stage, surrounded by musicians ranging from 22 to retirement age. The audience before her looks more like her elders than her peers, and if that doesn't change, it could have an effect on her career. Even so, that's not Tidman's primary concern.

"I just want people to come who enjoy it," she says. "I don't really care how old they are."

And really, who cares if the traditional symphony audience is getting older? So what if they eventually disappear?

If you're not an ASO employee or patron, those are natural questions. What you may not know is that even if you never set foot inside a symphony performance — or a ballet or opera, for that matter — its existence benefits the community. Arts contributed nearly \$700 billion, or 4.32 percent, to the country's 2012 gross domestic product — even more than the construction industry. The financial impact is also significant in Alabama, where the ASO is the largest employer of performing artists and accounts for an \$18.2 million annual economic impact.

Economic development organizations such as the Birmingham Business Alliance tout such data not only for its financial impact, but also as a tool for recruiting and retaining people and new businesses. Its Blueprint Birmingham strategic plan indicates the organization's interest in culture and entertainment for those very reasons, and the BBA has aligned with Create Birmingham to support its master plan.

What can they do about it?

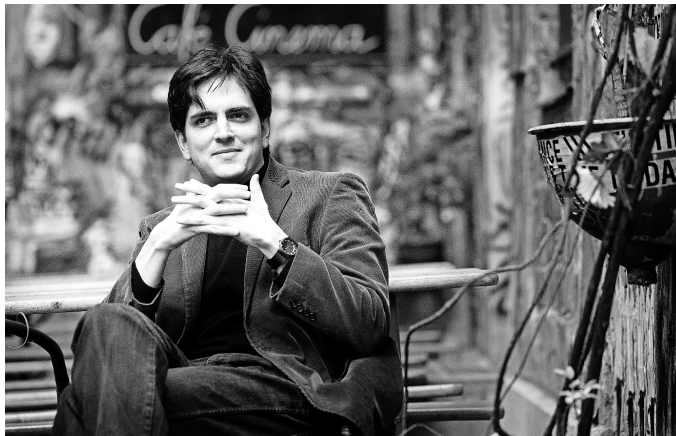
Although such behind-the-scenes machinations may not be on her mind, Birmingham newcomers like Tidman have found their expectations exceeded. The Northwestern graduate's ASO audition was her first Birmingham visit. It was a whirlwind day that concluded with a job offer.

"I wasn't really here long enough to see what the city was like," she says. "So when I got the job — I'm not going to lie, I didn't know anything about Birmingham — so I was a little disappointed. I was like, 'Oh, I have to move to Alabama.' But then I got here, and it turns out I really like it."

Being a Birmingham booster seems to be in the thing, observes fellow newcomer Jonathan Hoffman. Like Tidman, he's the epitome of the ASO's target demographic. When he and his wife arrived in Birmingham in September, Hoffman quickly called the ASO to learn about its young professionals and attorneys groups. The 27-year-old attorney was dismayed to learn both support groups were in hibernation.

"There's a gap between young professionals and orchestral music," says Hoffman, who received a musical composition degree from Emory University. "There's an uncertainty of what you're going to get. When do you clap? How do you react to this unfamiliar music?"

Then there's the fear of going alone; a 2014 National Endowment for the Arts report showed that 22 percent of those surveyed didn't attend arts events because they didn't have someone to go with. Hoffman is inclined to attend such events regardless, but others are not. He's assumed an evangelical role, collaborat-



"He's so electric. All these little electrical particles are coming together," said ASO Director of Communications and Public Relations Debbie Bartoletti of new conductor Carlos Izcaray. "It's like a firework." (Courtesy)



Alabama Symphony Orchestra flutist Hillary Tidman — who, at 22, falls into the symphony's target demographic for now — said she was at first disappointed after accepting her job offer. "But then I got here, and it turns out I really like it." (Tanika Moore@moore@gmail.com)

ing with ASO staff to relaunch the junior patrons group. Now in the process of gathering information and establishing an executive committee, the group aims to appeal as much to college students as those nearing the peak of their careers. Hoffman hopes to create a social environment in which members build relationships with the orchestra's musicians and each other, even while educating newcomers about classical music.

"It's one thing to get people in the concert, but having the junior patrons group gets them actually involved, not passively sitting in the audience. It gives them the opportunity to give input on the kind of things they would want to see," Tidman says.

The Junior Patrons effort is a natural extension of the ASO's existing programming. The Classical Edge series continues to increase its emphasis on fusing indie-rock bands with the orchestra. This year, for instance, young composer William Brittle reimagined rock band Wye Oak's latest album, translating it from a primarily guitar-and-drum duo to an orchestral piece.

Director of Artistic Planning Pierre Ruhe, who programs this and other series, says that it's becoming easier and easier to find those opportunities.

"Name a young composer who doesn't study five other genres of music," he says. "It's an approach Izcaray compares to cuisine. Diners aren't always in the mood for a white tablecloth restaurant. Sometimes, street food is the way to go."

"Tastes aren't changing, they're expanding," he says. "We're trying to bring the same type of palate to the symphony world."

In the process, though, the ASO must also listen to what its audiences want. The Wye Oak show, for example, was sparsely attended with a couple hundred people occupying the 1,319-seat ASC Jemison Concert Hall. Before the Bryce Dessner show, Bartoletti people heard lamentations that Dessner, who writes music and performs in the band, wasn't the National's lead singer.

"No, he's just the guts and the core of The National," she says, laughing.

Even so, Bartoletti acknowledges that programming and marketing walk a tightrope, a constant tension between drawing new audience members to a show and educating them on the symphony itself. "That's where we may have to organically look at what this series is going to be. It needs to be driven by the public — we want to educate and have this available, but we also want the public to embrace it."

The ASO isn't alone in this approach; organizations around the country are investing millions of dollars in similar efforts. The parallels are clear: Challenges exist, and the ASO is in good company when attempting innovative programming to attract and engage with new

audiences.

The RAND report "A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts" suggests arts organizations can increase audience with targeted marketing strategies. Education can also be a factor. As patrons of all walks learn more about the arts, they can build confidence in their own taste. Some organizations have addressed that through online video campaigns; the ASO may include its musicians in a marketing campaign designed to build familiarity with the artists, if not the work. Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle saw a similar video and print campaign lead to a 100 percent increase in its sales to teenagers over the course of four years. (However, getting the video in front of potential patrons was a barrier in itself.)

But visibility among target demographics isn't the only piece of the puzzle. Childhood arts education remains a strategic way to build future audience.

That was the case for Tidman, who began playing piano as a small child. As her mom's concert buddy, her musical interests grew. Tidman wanted to play in orchestra, and so she began learning flute in elementary school. Her musical education continued naturally from there, carrying her to youth orchestras, a performing arts high school and on to Northwestern University, where she received a bachelor's of music in flute performance.

"I didn't decide one day I wanted to be a musician," she says.

Her path unfolded naturally. Izcaray was also introduced to music at a young age; at 3, he began studying in his native Venezuela's public system of youth orchestras. Birmingham city children will soon have more abundant opportunities to increase their own music experience. Funds from a February city property tax increase will in spring 2017 re-establish music and arts education in Birmingham City Schools while making pre-K widely available. The tax goes into effect in January 2016, and will be reflected in the system's October 2016 budgeting.

The ASO is already active in its own educational outreach. The orchestra regularly travels to area schools for abbreviated, one-hour-long performances, typically not conducted by the music director. The performances typically emphasize familiar music such as the Angry Birds theme song or works from films like "Star Wars." Although it isn't traditionally part of his role, Izcaray intends to be active in such performances.

"We want to make this as much of an organic thing to serve both Birmingham and Alabama," says the father of two.

Enthusiasm over Izcaray's hire, paired with strategic audience development efforts, are creating new energy around the ASO, Bartoletti says.

"He's so electric. All these little electrical particles are coming together," she says. "It's like a firework."

SUNDAY'S SHOW

■ The Alabama Symphony Orchestra will take center stage today at 3 p.m. at the Avondale Park Amphitheater. The free, family-friendly event will feature classical music from musicals and films, such as selections from "The Sound of Music" and "The Music Man." Before the show, children can get an up-close-and-personal look at what makes the music in the Symphony Education Department's instrument "petting zoo."

■ A ticketed reception, \$5 at the door, will be held before the show to benefit Red Mountain School and Avondale Elementary School. Silvertron Cafe and Little Savannah will provide light refreshments.

■ Other upcoming shows include the music of John Williams (May 2), Brahms Symphony No. 1 (May 8-9), the Alabama Youth Symphony Orchestra's spring concert (May 9), Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2 (May 29-30) and Symphony in the Summer at Railroad Park (June 5-7).

■ More at alabamasympphony.org.

GET INVOLVED WITH THE ASO'S JUNIOR PATRONS

Although the group won't officially launch until the 2015-16 season, the Alabama Symphony Orchestra junior patrons group is now organizing. The group will offer levels of membership that include discounts to ASO concerts, socials and opportunities to meet the orchestra's musicians. Ultimately, the group expects to expand to fundraising and service roles to further support the ASO.

Volunteer leader Jonathan Hoffman, 27, says the ASO exceeds expectations for a city of Birmingham's size, not just for quality, but also affordability and the number of shows.

He says, "The whole goal of all this is to create a way for meaningful, affordable access for people our age to the symphony."

Learn more by emailing Hoffman at jhoffman@balch.com.

CLASSICAL NEWBIE?

You've never given much thought to classical music, but you'd like to give it a try. Where do you begin? Alabama Symphony Orchestra flautist Hillary Tidman recommends the work of Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

"He has some of the best music for just about every combination of musicians: symphonies, concert, ballet, opera, etc."

ASO junior patrons volunteer Jonathan Hoffman regularly suggests John Adams' "Short Ride in a Fast Machine" to his peers. It's a four-minute piece that is as upbeat and exciting as its name, he says, and defies expectations.

"It's rhythmic, but in a 'I can feel the beat' kind of way, not a super-artsy 'bet you can't guess what we're doing sort of way," he says. Hoffman also notes that its dramatic brass is sure to impress, and Adams is an icon of contemporary American art music. "They're experiencing one of the best minds out there."

Carla Jean Whitley