



Carole Crosby



Emily Cooley



Laura Park

Alumni Highlight

From Virtuoso to Verdict

Curtis alumni develop the skills and experience that transfer from the concert stage to the courtroom and beyond. BY RYAN LATHAN



Marsha Hunter



→ **Many celebrated composers** tried their hand at a career in law to varying degrees of success, but all became famous for their music instead: George Frideric Handel, Georg Philip Telemann, Robert Schumann, Leopold Mozart, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, and Igor Stravinsky. Conversely, what inspires musicians to become lawyers?

While numerous Curtis alumni have achieved renown on stages across the globe, some have pursued entirely different paths. Self-discipline, motivation, intense focus, analytical thinking, and mental acuity are all shared attributes of

musicians and lawyers, along with the experience of being trained to respond positively to criticism and being detail and ensemble/team-oriented in high-stress circumstances. Four alumni—**Emily Cooley, Laura Park, Marsha Hunter, and Carole Crosby**—told *Overtones* how Curtis impacted their lives and ultimately led them to careers in law and law-adjacent professions.

Emily Cooley (Composition '17), a student at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, received music degrees from Yale University and the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music

before attending Curtis for graduate studies in composition. She credits the school's Community Artist program for inspiring her current path: "I had teachers and mentors at Curtis who recognized that my identity as a musician was deeply tied to my interest in social justice and my desire to have an impact on systemic inequities in Philadelphia," she says, referring to chair of career studies Mary Javian (Double Bass '99), among other faculty. Cooley is now president of the Custody and Support Assistance Clinic.

"One of my projects [at Curtis] was to design and teach composing

and songwriting programming at a Pennsylvania State Prison called SCI Graterford. Meeting and getting to know incarcerated people made me want to reevaluate my career. I decided law school would be the best way to pivot into doing social justice work, [and] I'll be working in civil legal aid, providing legal services to low-income people, [including] legal issues related to housing, public benefits, family law, disability law, and more."

Laura Park (Violin '16), currently a J.D. candidate at Harvard Law School and a former first violin of the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, the Washington National Opera Orchestra, and the Grant Park Orchestra, shifted her focus to a career in law when performances came to a halt during the COVID-19 lockdowns. "As the orchestras I played in entered emergency negotiations around force majeure clauses, and the uncertainty around pay, benefits, and protections was at an all-time high, I realized that lawyers were moving the conversation forward and getting tangible results for the musicians. I wanted to be on that side of the table and started to look into what it might take to get there." Since entering Harvard, Ms. Park "discovered new interests in trial litigation and criminal law" and will join a law firm in New York City as an associate, focusing on white-collar defense and investigations. Expressing an interest in becoming a trial attorney in the future, she notes the parallels between performing and trial advocacy. "At their core, both are about taking a series of notes or facts or legal doctrines and shaping them into something one then communicates, clearly, honestly, and convincingly, to a group of people that are listening and critiquing."

Longtime alumni trustee **Marsha Hunter** (Opera '77) spent 25 years as a renowned opera, theater, and

chamber music performer before forging a new career as the CEO and co-founder of Johnson and Hunter, Inc. As specialists in legal communication, Ms. Hunter and her husband, Brian K. Johnson, traveled the globe training attorneys to convey their thoughts and arguments confidently and persuasively in various settings. In three bestselling books—*The Articulate Advocate*, *The Articulate Attorney*, and *The Articulate Witness*—she has taught lawyers how to sharpen their advocacy skills, transactional attorneys how to deliver polished, articulate presentations, and advised witnesses on how to testify under oath effectively.

Though not a lawyer, Ms. Hunter brings a performer's eye to legal presentation: the parameters of volume when speaking, the fact that "everybody talks with their hands," yet "in law, people don't often do that," and even the basics of helping lawyers use a lectern, store their papers, and present a case in a smooth and compelling manner. Noting the parallels between music performance, persuasive speaking, and law, she says it all comes down to "practice and taking a hard look at it—asking, 'Was it good enough?'"

Carole Crosby (Harp '64) has had a remarkable career in the performing arts, law, and philanthropy. Following her studies at Curtis, she

joined the Atlanta Symphony, then served as the principal harpist for the Detroit Symphony, where she moonlighted as a Motown session musician, even performing harp on Marvin Gaye's 1971 classic album, *What's Going On?*

"When I was in my junior year of high school, I took a business law class, and that really sparked something in me," she says. "Years later, I was in the Detroit Symphony and had a friend who was applying to law school. She gave me her LSAT book, and I said, I want to do that, too."

Ms. Crosby enrolled in night classes at Detroit College of Law and was valedictorian of her class before becoming a partner at Butzel Long in downtown Detroit, Michigan, eventually moving to Florida with her husband. She remains deeply involved in the arts as the president of the board of trustees of the Hermitage Artist Retreat, a multi-disciplinary national arts incubator, and immediate past president of the Asolo Repertory Theatre in Sarasota. Still working remotely as an arbitrator (via Zoom), with around 35 cases a year, she thinks back fondly on her time at Curtis: "I loved it: the music, the discipline instilled, the interaction with the other kids—it was like the dawning of a person. All of that can translate into so many other things. It was a wonderful experience."

The Musicality of Law

Music is inherently lawful. Even as early as 800 B.C., the disciplines of music and law have been inextricably linked. Ancient Greek city-states espoused the importance of music in forming laws and institutions. The word "nomos," or law, inversely refers to a song, and laws were often preserved in the meter of songs. Even the philosopher Plato noted, "Any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole state, for when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state always change." During the Middle Ages, when every student of law was required to study the *Quadrivium* (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music) as part of the *artes liberales*, lawyers were often musicians.