

NOTEWORTHY

VOLUNTEER COUNCIL FOR THE NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CARMEL CLAY THOMPSON



Spring at last! And the completion of an exceptional three-month period of activity for the members of the Volunteer Council. I want to thank the many volunteers who turned out for events at the Congressional Cemetery, Union Station, the National Zoo, the zoo at the Ritz Carlton on behalf of THEARC, The Shift concerts, the coffee concerts, NSO music for Young Audiences, the National Portrait Gallery, Family Concerts, DC Youth Open House, special polling events at the Hamilton, an IPZ at Ft. Belvoir, the Welcome Center, Young Peoples Concerts, the NSO musicians' instrument training and the orchestra luncheon. This is a staggering list, and I've probably missed a few. But I would be negligent if I didn't also thank the many members who worked behind the scenes to make all this happen. You all have done an outstanding job.

Our work for the year is not finished. The Guest Conductor's Reception is scheduled for May 10th. I strongly encourage you to sign up and take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the programs that Sir Mark Elder will be conducting over a two-week period here, and with the remarkable achievements of his career.

The Annual Spring Membership Brunch and General Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 12th at Clyde's at the Mark Center at 11:00. Please come. Don't forget to offer a ride if you're driving to members in your neighborhood, particularly those who are new to the Volunteer Council. I look forward to seeing you at the Brunch and congratulating you in person for your remarkable gifts of service to the VCNSO this past season.

WINTER MEETING SPARKS DESIRE FOR TUNEUP AND RENEWAL

DIANA PHILLIPS

What does it mean to "turn the page" and "forge our future?" When the Women's Committee for the National Symphony Orchestra became the Volunteer Council for the National Symphony Orchestra, members were invited to evaluate our organization and speak their minds about how we move forward.

The Volunteer Council for the National Symphony Orchestra held a Winter Meeting on February 26 at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall Box Tier. The venue was perfect for our opportunity to come together in an atmosphere that speaks to all that we stand for: our love of symphonic music and the National Symphony Orchestra and our desire to spread the joy of the NSO to all ages and musical persuasions in the Metro DC area. We are a group of men and women interested in sharing what music has brought to our lives; yet we recognize that as music progresses, we have the chance to move with it.



This working lunch meeting was a no-nonsense opportunity to renew ourselves with our name change. We wanted to examine our group and share our thoughts as we look ahead. We were pleased to be joined by Gary Ginstling, NSO executive director; Charlie Nilles, double bassist for the NSO; Maya Weil from the DC Youth Orchestra Program; Nikki Grizzle, Special Projects and Community Relations Manager for the Washington National Opera; and Friends Director Brooks Boeke. All ideas were welcome and there were plenty. Table discussions generated both enthusiasm and solid suggestions. What did we learn?

How do we define our mission as the Volunteer Council? We enjoy what we do, but do we do everything that could fall within our purview? And do we know when something doesn't? One sentence could put us all on the same page and move us in a united direction. We need a small group of members to work on a mission statement.

Collaboration, Community Involvement. Big Concepts: How can we start to make them work? It became clear that our opportunities for increased community engagement run in several directions. Music programs and groups are all around us and within our midst at the Kennedy Center as well. We know how successfully our Petting Zoos work, and we know that we are the engine behind them, but do others? Similarly, how well do we know the DC Youth Orchestra Program and its opportunities for group and ensemble training for children, from the ages of 4½ to 18? And how conversant are we in sharing that knowledge with those who would appreciate opportunities for their children? How can we team up?

And as we continue with our Instrument Petting Zoos, what improvements can we make in security, management, instruction, and any other areas?

Outreach, including working especially with new members: What really says "Welcome to the Volunteer Council? Here's how you can help."

We don't have chapters anymore, so it is difficult to reference other members who live in the same area to keep a mentoring eye on newcomers. Or is it? Zip codes identify where we all live; they can be used to connect new members with those who are more experienced. The difficulties of connecting enthusiastic new members with the apparatus of the Kennedy Center and the Volunteer Council

generated many comments and many suggestions as well. Do new members have meaningful and up-to-date materials from the time they join? Along with our invaluable Membership Directory, we could provide member helping hands maps of the interior spaces in the Kennedy Center, directions on transportation and parking.

How can we grow in our appreciation of symphonic music and music of all genres? Music is all around us, yet we need to take advantage of opportunities to bring it to the Volunteer Council. Coffee discussion groups; forums with musicians, conductors, knowledgeable speakers on music-related topics; events with NSO Youth Fellows could be planned. And we don't need a large audience, just a truly interested group for such events. We want to build a feeling of loyalty and family with our NSO musicians.

Printed and electronic materials: We need to tackle it all! Everything that says who we are and what we do needs review and revision with welcoming and informative language, graphics, schedules, and contact information. Printed materials and our Volunteer Council webpage, to be developed in the weeks ahead, will give us such opportunities.

We want to thank those who have made these concrete suggestions, but the next steps are for all of us. Please send Diana Phillips (dianacphillips@gmail.com) an e-mail to let her know how you would like to help.



THE PETTING ZOO CAN BE BETTER THE SECOND TIME AROUND MAUREEN LAMBE

Cabin fever had set in during the coldest week on record this past winter. With a low of 11 and a high of 21 degrees on January 6, over 100 children, parents and young adults took advantage of two Instrument Petting Zoos at the National Portrait Gallery. Jed, who is eight years old, plays clarinet and piano, writes songs, and sings. He asked why the violin was so small as he tried all string instruments available at the Petting Zoo. Jed displayed a big smile as he shared that his favorite part of the NSO concert was *Mambo*. Young sisters, Sophia and Sabrina, shared their love of music. Sophia's favorite instrument is the cello; she has played the violin and now plays piano. Sabrina, her younger sister, plays the violin. Sophia enjoyed practicing the C scales on her violin but now enjoys playing *Russian Sailor* on the piano.



Stuart and Sherry are students at Randolph College in Virginia who decided, while on a holiday break, to attend the NSO concert and Petting Zoo. Stuart played the violin for 9 years and now plays the cello.

Sherry has played the piano since age seven and has perfect pitch. They both enjoyed playing new instruments during the Petting Zoo. Sherry has a YouTube channel and is exploring the marriage of musical genres like rock music with piano, heavy metal with cello and hip hop with violin. Stuart plays music for relaxation and finds it a deeply personal experience that helps him to organize his thoughts. enjoyed the opportunity to spend the day feeding their passion for music.



Research supports that musical ability develops from birth to age 9, and Aaron Williams validates that research. He was five when he attended a Petting Zoo and concert sponsored by the NSO, which resulted in his playing the trumpet for 11 years, participating in school bands and the chorus. The memory of his band class is a fond one that still sticks with Aaron today. So much so that when he saw that the VC/NSO was holding two Petting



Zoos as bookends to the NSO Family Concert, *Bernstein: Inside the Music*, Aaron had to revisit the transformational event from 18 years ago. Having graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in Animal Science in 2016, Aaron has been contemplating going back to school to study music. He took the opportunity to play the cello, viola and violin during both Petting Zoo sessions and determined that he best enjoyed the tenor-like sounds of the violin. Aaron's day at the National Portrait Gallery only confirmed his desire to continue his study of music.

THE WALKER FAMILY AND THE POWER OF MUSIC

DIANA PHILLIPS

It would have been difficult to overlook the Walker family at a recent Petting Zoo. I first noticed a young man a few feet away from me, serious and helpful seating younger children with the cello, too bulky for some little ones, yet alluring at the same time. They really wanted to hold the bow, to feel the wood, to try to get a sound. Then a nearby adult who was watching asked, "Could you play something?" "Sure," said the young man, and my ears perked up as he began and completed the Prelude from the Unaccompanied Cello Suite No. 1 by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Having resided in Chicago, Jamaica, Paris, London, Honduras, Fort Lauderdale, Atlanta and Los Angeles, they now live in Washington. Their parents, Lisa and Courtney, decided home-schooling was best for their general education; the Suzuki method for their musical education. Lisa attributes her children's development in all areas, not just music, to their two-hours-per-day music time, partly spent practicing their instruments and partly in any other music activity. She sees the grounding they receive in all areas as a result. Their other schooling is divided into 30-minute increments. Lisa described her own early years as a student who "wasn't very good" in her academic subjects, but says that once she found her instrument, not the piano which her mother was expecting, but the violin, she was pretty much off and running in all of her subjects.

One by one, each younger child in the Walker household looks to his older siblings who have set the tone in both discipline and love of music; he or she then chooses his or her own instruments. When Luke heard and saw a German cellist, he simply said, "want to do that." Jada, now age 10, wanted to play the viola rather than the violin before she was big enough for it, but she has turned out to be a competitor, saying early on, "I want to do TWO hours." She is a violist.



The Walkers in February: Courtney, Alex (1), Emma (5), Zara (8), Jada (10), Luke (12), Lisa.

Zara, now age eight, was playing a Vivaldi violin concerto beginning at age four and practicing one-and-a-half hours per day; she practices to “feel good.” Lisa calls her the “jaw-dropper” one. Emma is now five, and has moved to the cello; she has a “stunning ear.”

Lisa’s evaluations of her children are varied and honest (she has her Doctor of Musical Arts in Violin Performance degree from Claremont Graduate University), but what really stands out is how she instills her belief in them that music is a powerful tool. Studying music, she says, means you learn about yourself. Music is a mirror that can be right in front of the child, to help a child find balance, develop a thought process, learn to refine and enhance, develop an approach to things. Through music children can learn to analyze a situation and discover on their own why something, “anything” didn’t go well, and to apply solutions. Children develop themselves in and through music, Lisa says. They find their structure and work to train themselves.

How about Mr. Walker? I wondered. Courtney Walker is not a musician, but clearly his partnering is crucial in keeping a family of seven with extraordinary musical development in synch each and every day. “He sees the magic,” says Lisa. And it is Mr. Walker who writes the articles, takes the photos, and publicizes the news of a family whose competitions and achievements would be unknown otherwise.

Every child is at a different place at a different time, but “kids want to move up,” Lisa Walker explains. “They learn to self-diagnose. I show them the mirror. If you get the motor to work, you don’t have to keep pushing the car.”

ART IS THE ANSWER CAROL RUPPEL— EDITOR



The Kennedy Center held its fifth annual Arts Summit on April 16, drawing participants from around the country—urban planners, poets, scientists, performing artists, playwrights, community leaders, teachers, arts administrators--to discuss how making art can help carry us into a future better than today. Such a world would be more colorblind, healthy, personally connected, just, equitable and beautiful. Tall order for a one-day summit.

The point of departure was President Kennedy's 1961 Moon Shot Speech to Congress. "...it is time for this nation to take a clearly leading role in space achievement, which in many ways may hold the key to our future on earth. His speech was a hefty "ask" for appropriations of billions of dollars to put a man on the moon, and served as the summit's metaphor, launching the arts as a means to solve today's social problems. We were reminded that the Kennedy Center's three-part mission is to offer arts education, performances and a living memorial to JFK.

Chairman of the Board of Trustees David Rubenstein recounted that the renowned Spanish cellist Pablo Casals had essentially boycotted the United States after the Spanish Civil War due to our government's support of Spain's dictator Francisco Franco, but he agreed to perform at the Kennedy White House because of Kennedy's respect of human rights. Another tidbit the always droll Rubenstein imparted: noting that JFK was not so enamored of classical music as some, a reporter asked Jackie to name her husband's favorite song, and she replied, "Well, to be honest, it's "Hail to the Chief." Rubenstein also remembered that in a four-and-a-half-hour attempt to compose and perform a rap song, his 21-year-old collaborator commented, "You're the whitest man I ever met."

KC President Deborah Rutter echoed Rubenstein's message that the Kennedy Center offers a platform for all voices to be heard, and that it is a place where everyone can come to enjoy art without necessarily buying a ticket. She noted, "We stand on the land of the Piscataway" and we need to understand the beauty and power of the people, native Americans, who lived here. Thus she's named a native American as resident artist.

The annual summit has come to mark the transition from one class of Kennedy Center "Citizen Artist Fellows" to another, and the outgoing class provided much of the day's inspiration. Their bios are more than impressive, defying their young ages. They're all accomplished artist/activists, promoting social change around the country, and they all cross conventional professional boundaries in a very 21st century spirit. Ekene Ijeoma opened the proceedings with his jazz composition, "Deconstructed Anthem," a reworking of the Star Spangled Banner with mathematically placed silences to represent the pace at which people—2.3 million today—are incarcerated in the U.S. Ijeoma is "an artist and designer living and working in New York and Chicago at the intersections of design, architecture, music, performance and technology. He's currently a School for the Art Institute of Chicago Mitchell Visiting Professor in the Department of Architecture, Interior Architecture, and Designed Objects and an Urban Design Forum Forefront Fellow." This is a fraction of his credits, and he is one of seven such Citizen Artist Fellows. Another is a composer who, with her colleague and fellow fellow, trains homeless and incarcerated people to perform choral and symphonic music with the city's chorale and symphony orchestra in the belief that "musical engagement reconnects us to our shared humanity across vast divides, and ultimately impacts social justice."

Another of the many inspirational speakers, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, was a 2017 TED Global Fellow, recipient of the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative, Rockefeller Fellow, winner of the 2011 Herb Alpert Award in Theater, etc! He wrote the libretto for the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*, which premiered last September with Opera Philadelphia. Please "google" it, as it's a brilliant story and the trailer is worth watching. The Kennedy Center commissioned an evening-length work of his. He is a creative proponent and leader for "affirming black life in the public realm." He spoke of teaching his 16-year-old son to drive, and the warnings he must convey to him of "driving while black." A dominant theme throughout the day was the marginalization of blacks, the pervasiveness of racism and the need to face it head-on, through conversations and by nurturing empathy and humanity in everyone.

Angelique Power has been working for foundations in Chicago for some time, and as executive director of the Field Foundation, spearheaded a new grant model "centered around community empowerment through justice, art and leadership investment." She made clear that she's not dispensing charity, but rather making grants for social change, harnessing the creativity and power of underserved communities in Chicago. Her entire board and staff went through a training on racial justice to combat both overt and unintentional racist policies Chicagoans face daily. In its efforts to improve Chicago, Field seeks grantees with objectives to reverse poverty, boost education outcomes, stop violence, and offer access to arts organization, particularly for minorities. "We determined that while we cannot be race exclusive in our work, we will be race explicit and focus on understanding how funding with a racial equity lens can improve outcomes."

Bill O'Brien is the senior advisor for innovation and director of creative forces at the National Endowment for the Arts. He's an actor, award-winning theater director and also a scientist, and collaborates with the National Science Foundation and other groups to study creativity in the brain. He directs NEA's Military Healing Arts Network, drawing upon veterans' and also released prisoners creative artistic expression to ease their post-traumatic stress and re-entry into civilian life. O'Brien interviewed Dr. Jeremy Nobel, an internist and professor at Harvard's School of Public Health and Harvard's Medical School, an award-winning poet and medical humanist. Based on wide research, he discussed the arts' impact on wellness. Nobel contends that loneliness and isolation decrease our lifespan by 30 percent. Humans are "hard-wired for connection," and we need to share our personal narratives, and normalize creative expression as a daily activity. He proposes that doctors routinely ask their patients about their creative outlets in their line of questioning about exercise, diet, smoking, family history and the rest.

Damian Woetzel, well-known to the Kennedy Center for his semi-annual DEMO series, his 20 years as principal dancer with the New York City Ballet, went on to Harvard's Kennedy School to earn a graduate degree, taught at Harvard Law School, and served on President Obama's Committee on Arts and Humanities, where he created the Turnaround Arts education project. He's currently director of Aspen Institute's Arts Program, director of the Vail Dance Festival and soon to be president of Julliard. Woetzel recognizes that he devoted most of his life to aiming for perfection in classical ballet, and that perfection "cuts down on everything." He suggests that the federal government add a Department of Inspiration.

So much food for thought, but here are some conclusions gleaned from a memorable day. "Art" is practiced in every corner of this country by every age, ethnicity and economic group in a huge number of expected and unexpected settings. Racism is ingrained in our culture and we must facilitate discussions to address it head-on and work to combat it. Even if arts education goes unfunded in public schools, there are many ways to incorporate artistic expression into classrooms, and school leaders must be made aware of its role in human development. We need to harness emotional intelligence. Arts nurture compassion and empathy. We must stop compartmentalizing and specializing, and nurture the artist in everyone. We need to provide opportunities for people to tell their stories, in part to foster achievement and reduce personal isolation. Artistic expression helps overcome the fight-or-flight response that leads to isolation and loneliness, which are epidemic, and even criminal behavior. Finally, I came to share Rutter's and Rubenstein's belief that expanding the Kennedy Center into a campus is a good idea.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING GINNI GORMAN—HISTORIAN

Our group has been making a lot of history recently. During Lois Ancona's presidency, 2015-17, we comprehensively reviewed and revised our By-Laws and Policies and Procedures. The most significant change, approved by members at the Fall General Meeting in October 2016, was to dissolve chapters and to focus instead on committees organized by officers and board members to accomplish our goals.

Chapters had been developed in the 1950s to sell tickets, usher and do administrative work in the suburbs in connection with orchestra performances. They continued to play a major role in fundraising, especially in planning and staffing the Decorators Show Houses, which ran every day for a month. When our membership reached more than 1,000, the chapters seemed necessary to communicate with members. Lois pointed out in 2016 that our membership was about 330 and it was difficult to recruit leadership for six chapters plus the board. The amendments approved then changed the role of the first vice president, formerly vice president for chapters, to vice president for meetings.

When Carmel Thompson's presidency began in 2017, she augmented the board by giving members special assignments in support of specific activities. For example, Victoria Cordova is in charge of volunteers for Coffee Concerts and Peggy Siegel is charged with looking at representing our work in metrics.

At our 2017 Fall General Meeting, members took another big step and voted to change our name to the Volunteer Council for the National Symphony Orchestra. As had her predecessor Lois, Carmel met with past presidents to discuss the name change. She then sent her proposal to the general membership. Carmel noted that many men and perhaps younger women were not attracted to an organization called the Women's Committee, and that a number of other symphony orchestra volunteer groups had recently changed to less restrictive-sounding names. This new name is in line with branding updates that the NSO and Kennedy Center have been making and has officially been approved by the National Symphony Orchestra and Kennedy Center. The omni-talented Judy Canyock was able to rework our logo so that it entwines the letters VCNSO instead of WCNSO. Completing the change will require new signs and stationery and many other things.

Our major volunteer project, the instrument petting zoos, has been continually expanded by our accepting new challenges. We worked a long day during the Kennedy Center Open House and presented zoos at Opera in the Outfield, at the Hirshhorn Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, and the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center, in addition to all our usual assignments. In April we presented two big zoos at the National Zoo.

A new project we were asked to take on is conducting surveys at community concerts. Our first was the NSO performance at the Anthem, a new venue at the Wharf in Southwest DC. We asked attendees to complete a questionnaire on an iPad about the future of orchestra concerts. Maggie Stehman is training a group of survey takers to respond whenever we are asked to do this. In April we conducted surveys for NSO performances at the Historic Congressional Cemetery, at the Union Station concert and at the Kennedy Center during the SHIFT Festival of American Orchestras week.

CALENDAR SPRING 2018

MAY

- 10 Thursday, May 10
Guest Conductor's Reception — Sir Mark Elder
Bird Room, Concert Hall Second Tier. 12:30-1:30 pm
Respond to [C.Thompson & M. Stehman](#)
- 11 Friday, May 11
NSO Coffee Concert 11:30 am
The KC Cafe Arrive 9:15 am
Respond to [V. Cordova](#)
- 12 Saturday, May 12
Spring Buffet and Annual Meeting 11:00 am
Clyde's at Mark Center
Respond to [Diana Phillips](#)
- 17 Thursday, May 17
NSO Open Rehearsal WC/NSO invited 9:45 am
Gianandrea Noseda, conductor
James Ehnes, violinist
- 18 Friday, May 18
Petting Zoos Arrive 9:30 & 11:30 am
Brass of Peace Theater Lab
Sylvia Alimena, conductor
Respond to [J. Canyock & M. Stehman](#)
- 19 Saturday, May 19
Petting Zoos Arrive 10:00 am & 12:30 pm
Brass of Peace Theater Lab
Sylvia Alimena, conductor
Respond to [J. Canyock & M. Stehman](#)
- 22 Young People's Concerts (YPC). Arrive 10:00 am
Bernstein! Inside the Music Concert Hall
Respond to [A. King & S. Raffetto](#)
- 23 Young People's Concerts (YPC). Arrive 10:00 am
Bernstein! Inside the Music Concert Hall
Respond to [A. King & S. Raffetto](#)

JUNE

- 15 Friday, June 15 NSO Coffee Concert 11:30 am
The KC Cafe Arrive 9:15 am
Respond to [V. Cordova](#)

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER COUNCIL

The Volunteer Council was founded in 1941 as The Women's Committee for the National Symphony Orchestra to provide educational and financial support to the orchestra and offer anyone with an interest in symphonic music a networking group.

Today, the VC/NSO is open to women and men and is one of the leading orchestra volunteer organizations in the United States. The VC/NSO is associated with the American Symphony Orchestra League and the Association of Major Symphony Orchestra Volunteers.

Membership is open to anyone who shares a love of music, music education, and an interest in the National Symphony Orchestra.