

NOTEWORTHY

VOLUNTEER COUNCIL FOR THE NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
OCTOBER 2017

THE SUMMER OF 2017

The present board of the Women's Committee was elected in May and jumped right into a myriad of activities, some of them for the very first time and several away from our traditional projects at the Kennedy center. It began with the Kennedy Center Open House, where a very large Instrument Petting Zoo was held in the Atrium. It was a sea of red T-shirts!



A small group travelled to Columbia Heights to celebrate their annual Festival.



Then we were off to the Hirshhorn Museum and an outdoor venue for our petting zoo, part of their Sound Scene X Program. In its 10th year, the Sound Scene X Program showcased sounds of the city with hands-on audio construction, headphone listening, and more. Hearing as well as deaf audiences were very involved, and we focused on having our hearing-impaired participants feel the vibrations as we demonstrated the instruments. We were surprised at the number of adults who were excited to try our instruments!



TAKE ME OUT TO THE OPERA

Contributed by Diana Phillips , who is also the photographer for most of the photos in this edition of Noteworthy



Sunny skies and unusually warm temperatures greeted almost 20 enthusiastic Volunteer Council women and men on Saturday, September 23 as they boarded the Kennedy Center shuttle with musical instruments — some of them “children’s-size” — percussion, brass, woodwind and stringed, for the short ride to Nationals Park. The Volunteer Council held its signature activity, our “petting zoo,” named “Instrument Meet and Greet” for the occasion.

M&M’s Opera in the Outfield was the main event: a live opera performed in the Kennedy Center’s Opera House by the Washington National Opera, and simultaneously for free at Nationals Park on its high-definition NatsHD scoreboard. Before this year’s production, *Aida*, began, we quickly set up tables and chairs among the Park’s concession stations, transforming the area into a music workshop for literally hundreds of passersby. Intrigued by the setup, they proceeded to try blowing, plucking, bowing, and banging the various violins and cellos; flute, French horn and trombone; and all kinds of percussion instruments. Volunteer Council members demonstrated and offered encouragement to participants of all ages.

Although it was the Kennedy Center’s tenth season of presenting live opera by simulcast at Nationals Park to thousands, it was the Volunteer Council’s first foray. As an audience of hundreds watched *Aida*’s final performance of its engagement at the Opera House, thousands more saw the production at the same time on the outdoor giant screen, enjoying excellent audio and video delivery, as well as the comfort of a beautiful evening and mild temperatures. It was an evening many Volunteer Council members felt contributed to the appreciation of symphonic music. And who knows? A first-chair violinist or French horn player of the future may have gotten her or his start at our petting zoo!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Carmel Clay Thompson

Last week I attended a funeral in South Dakota. The service was held in the United Church of Christ, and most of the congregation were representative of that Great Plains German community and of the tradition of strong congregational singing. They did not disappoint that day. They sang on key and with robust strength. The dotted half notes were held to their full measure, and when the organ modulated to a higher key for the last stanza, the congregation joyfully followed along. It reminded me that beautiful music surrounds us in the least expected moments.



And so we begin a new season, with a remarkable new Music Director, Gianandrea Noseda, and a very accomplished new Executive Director for the NSO, Gary Ginstling. The season is filled with exciting opportunities for the *Women's Committee*—including, as I write, a new name: *Volunteer Council*. In keeping with the changes in the air, we have introduced a mode of communication, MailChimp, which presents the message entirely on the screen (no attachments). Please contact [Judy Canyock](#) if you are not receiving it or having difficulty identifying it in your email.

In recent months we have taken our Instrument “Petting Zoos” on the road—the Hirshhorn Gallery, the Columbia Heights Festival, the Opera in the Outfield at Nationals’ Ball Park, and the USO at Walter Reed. Our ranks have been augmented by young musicians from the District of Columbia Youth Orchestra Program, the NSO Youth Fellows, and the Kennedy Center Friends—all of whom have done an outstanding job relating to the children and demonstrating the instruments. These “zoos” have been exciting for our guests and rewarding for our members. We look forward to working with the band students from Lake Braddock High School at the Halloween Party.

Please join us at the Instrument Petting Zoos at the Halloween Party on October 29th and in recruiting for the two upcoming military concerts (free!) on November 10 and December 7. We will be recruiting active duty, retired service members and veterans and their families to fill the seats of the concert hall. Do reach out to any military families and veterans you may know and encourage them to reach out to others.

On behalf of our Board, I welcome you to a new and exciting season with the Volunteer Council. Come join us as we explore new opportunities to support the NSO and as we introduce young audiences to the excitement of musical instruments and the delights of attending an NSO concert.

MEET THE SMI CONDUCTOR. WAIT, WE'VE ALREADY MET

Carol Ruppel



The 2017 NSO Summer Music Institute provides accomplished high school and college orchestra musicians the opportunity to study for four weeks with members of the NSO in master and ensemble classes, to rehearse side-by-side with the NSO, and to perform in chamber groups at the Millennium Stage and in two full orchestra concerts in the Concert Hall. They fit a lot into those four weeks. They live in residence hotels in Foggy Bottom and spend most of their time playing music together. Women's Committee members drive them to master classes at NSO musicians' homes all over the Washington metro area.

This year the conductor was none other than the NSO principal horn Abel Pereira. The chamber concert program included Pereira's biography, which is so impressive that we decided to include most of it here, with permission from the Kennedy Center.

Abel Pereira came to the United States in 2014, when Christoph Eschenbach appointed him Principal Horn of the National Symphony Orchestra. Born in Porto, Portugal, into a family of fishermen, he began his musical studies at the age of ten and within a year began a solo career with orchestras across Europe. He earned his degree at ESMAE Politecnico Do Porto (Porto University) studying horn and continued his studies in Germany. He received his Ph.D. in coaching and performance from Porto University in 2012.

Pereira has performed and taught at major music festivals across Europe and the United States, and has won awards at international competitions in Germany, England, Holland, Brazil and the Czech Republic. His solo discography includes the complete Mozart horn concerti, "Romantic Repertoire for Horn and Piano," Richard Strauss' Horn Concerto No. 1 and the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante. In 2001 he recorded Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 2 for BBC TV. Before joining the NSO, Pereira played principal horn with the Porto Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, the London Philharmonic and the Berlin Philharmonic.

Dedicated to encouraging young musicians, he coached the brass section of the Portuguese Youth Orchestra and served on the audition panel for the European Youth Orchestra. For 14 years he was a professor at Lisbon and Porto Universities. Alongside his horn career, Pereira studied choral and orchestral conducting. He has guest-conducted for various European symphonies.

Under his baton, the SMI musicians in the final concert, Brahms' *Tragic Overture*, Vivaldi's *Oboe Concerto in D Minor*, Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 1* and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6* lived up to his professional standards.

KOJO NMAMDI AND GIANANDREA NOSEDA

Carol Ruppel, Editor

Kojo Nnamdi interviewed our new Kennedy Center Music Director and NSO Conductor on his WAMU radio show on September 20 in a program he called *How Gianandrea Nosedata Plans to Transform the National Symphony Orchestra*. Here are some highlights.

Nosedata began by stating that he's "very impressed by the NSO players," and when Nnamdi mentioned Washington Post critic Anne Midgette's "lackluster" comment, Nosedata replied that all world-class orchestras have their ups and downs. The aim is to be consistently good. In his experience as visiting conductor of the NSO on four different occasions, before assuming his post, he found the artists emotionally and technically excellent.

When asked about enlisting young audiences, he first mentioned In Your Neighborhood, the annual NSO series of chamber concerts, children's concerts, master classes and a full orchestra concert that take place over a week in January in a Washington neighborhood. The orchestra brings the music to the residents, inspiring them to attend concert hall performances. The Opera House in Turino, where he was conductor for 10 years, had a similar program. As to "white and wealthy" audiences, Nosedata says the NSO has been working to change that, and mentioned collaboration with rapper Kendrick Lamar. He prefers not to categorize music, to put it in different boxes, but rather to recognize good and bad music. We need to "keep the energy of rappers and rock stars" and "approach this topic from different angles." He was clearly familiar with the subject, the need and the efforts already undertaken. He noted that the Kennedy Center does well with its educational mission, and that music is crucial in the formation of every individual.

A caller asked about applauding between movements. Is it a no-no? Nosedata is open to breaking that taboo. "Why not applaud? Life should be more normal and simple. Feel free. Do it." Another asked about the role of improvisation in classical music. Nosedata found that interesting, and vowed to promote more improvisation, expanding on the possibilities offered by *Rhapsody in Blue*.

MUSIC'S VISIBLE EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN

Carol Ruppel, Editor

The Volunteer Council has participated with the Sound Health efforts of the NSO for some time, staffing petting zoos in medical centers such as the NIH, Walter Reed and Inova Hospital. Sound Health, a collaboration between the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Kennedy Center, in association with the National Endowment for the Arts, sponsored free yoga sessions at the Kennedy Center over the spring. Over two days in June, the latest Sound Health effort, *Music and the Mind*, took place, opening with an NSO performance, followed by a day of workshops. The workshops presented research on "music's ability to engage and heal, from its effects on the developing brain to its therapeutic benefits for individuals with autism, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and other neurological disorders." (Kennedy Center press release). Pat Carroll, Peggy Siegel and I covered the program for the Volunteer Council, and what follows is a compilation of our observations. The entire conference is available on YouTube. We have provided links for the highlights.



At Friday's NSO concert, host Rene Fleming, Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor at Large, introduced Saturday's workshop topics. We met the presenters--physicians, scientists, musicians and music therapists. Here are some highlights that Pat took away from both the concert and the sessions.

1. **Music and Creativity**- Ben Folds, Kennedy Center artistic advisor, composer and pianist, was asked to compose a piece for the Orchestra in 10 minutes. An audience member shouted out "A minor," and, playing a few notes at a time, Folds gradually brought in each section of the Orchestra until he had completed the piece in the key of A minor that the Orchestra then performed.

Watch here:

[*Ben Folds Composes Live*](#)



2. Everyone hears music differently, as was illustrated while the Symphony performed the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth. Various members of the audience were given small clickers to click when they heard the same phrase repeated. Some heard 10 repetitions while others heard 1,000. There were actually 200.

3. Music affects our emotions. This was demonstrated by Rene Fleming singing an aria from a Czech Opera, which not many of us knew. Despite the foreign language, the sound of her sweet singing touched most of us.

4. **Childhood Development**- The impact of music on children's development shows why our instrument petting zoos are so important to young children. This allows them to see, touch, feel and try to play an instrument.

5. **Music Therapy**-This seminar illustrated how a young man, who'd been in a coma for two years following a traumatic brain injury caused by a snowboarding accident, could slowly come back with the help of a music therapist. Music is helping Wounded Warriors, other victims of traumatic brain injuries, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's patients, children with autism, and many more with mental and physical illnesses.

6. In **Music and Aging**, stroke patients from INOVA Hospital performed a song they had composed. One of the stroke patients was 10 years old when she had her stroke and is now on her way to college.

7. All of these participating professionals are also musicians, not necessarily trained, but music is a big part of their lives.



Peggy Siegel went to several of the workshops and here are her takeaways from two.

Music and Childhood Development was presented by Dr. Nina Kraus, professor of communication sciences, neurobiology, and otolaryngology (the study of diseases of the ear, nose and throat.) Kraus studies the biology of auditory learning at Northwestern University. She's also an inventor and amateur musician. She and four DC Youth Orchestra members discussed how sound impacts our brain and music is key to communication and brain health.

The DCYOP students noted that studying music helps them in their daily lives--in developing critical thinking skills, maintaining focus, persisting in academics, making new friends, collaborating, developing patience and remaining calm in the face of society's challenges.

Incidentally, such skills were abundantly evident on April 1, 2017, when Volunteer Council members visited the DC Youth Orchestra at Eastern High School. It was a real treat several months later to see and especially hear the student musicians share their thoughts during Sound Health, culminating in their performance as a quartet—a heavenly end, to echo Kennedy Center President Rutter, to an intriguing session.

[*Jazz, Creativity and the Brain*](#) demonstrated how neuroscientists are examining “the elusive nature of human creativity” through improvisational art forms such as jazz and freestyle rap. Dr. Charles Limb, professor and chief head-neck surgeon at UC San Francisco, served as moderator. Limb’s research addresses the neural basis of musical creativity as well as the study of musical perception in deaf individuals with cochlear implants. He was joined on stage by two renowned jazz musicians—composer and pianist Vijay Iyer, who also has a doctorate in cognitive neuroscience, and singer, bassist and four-time Grammy Award winner Esperanza Spaulding.

“We could not understand hearing by simply looking at the ear,” began Limb, and “words are pretty bad at describing music...so we had to move to the brain itself,” where it’s now possible to listen to electricity within the brain. The capacity for improvisation does not just reside with jazz musicians, he continued. It is an everyday activity. Humans are hard-wired not only to hear music, but also to create music. As evidence, Limb cited the discovery of a fossil flute from Southern Germany, carved from the bone of a bird some 35,000-40,000 years ago.

“Music starts with empathy,” observed Iyer, with individuals moving in sync, listening to each other and coordinating their behavior. Even when the music is already prepared, “you are still improvising with your hands, your inflection, and your voice,” added Spaulding. The beauty of improvisation is that it allows us to do anything, based on mutual agreement that we can co-create something that is honest and true. Soloing involves listening to other people and building together.

The creativity of the session was ubiquitous, not only when Iyer and Spaulding began improvising during a lively duet on piano and bass, but also during their freewheeling dialogue with its own verbal tempo and melody that pursued unexpected tangents.

Just as improvisation catalyzes interesting music and discussion, so too do advances in neurology, by creating a needed bridge between art and science. “Artistic creativity is a neurologic product that can be examined using rigorous scientific methods,” explained Dr. Limb. Artists and scientists can agree that the brain is a necessary ingredient to create art. Consequently, we should be able to study the brain, using a scanner and an MRI, to see how it behaves and how it looks.

Limb’s ultimate goal is “to help people who cannot hear to hear again.” For all of us, a critical question becomes: how do we measure the creative brain in action and over a lifetime? His answer: begin by funding research on neuroscience.

Carol Ruppel on [*Creative Aging*](#)

Dr. Anirudd Patel, a psychology professor at Tufts who conducts research on music and the brain, music neuroscience, gave the session. His lecture focused more on the salutary effects of making rather than listening to music. We have new tools in the last roughly 20 years. One is functional magnetic resonance imaging, which shows areas of the brain affected by music. The imaging reveals that music activates both sides of the brain, and you can see exactly the different areas where rhythm, melody, harmony and so on register. Another tool, electroencephalography (EEG), also shows music’s effects on the brain in real time.

Music requires physical and mental processing. Music's emotional impact, all over the brain, enables neuroplasticity through the release of dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin, oxytocin, etc. This process changes the brain's function and structure. There are links between music-making and three fundamental brain functions: movement, memory and language.

Darwin wrote about the biology of beat, stating that "the perception, if not the enjoyment, of musical cadences and rhythm is probably common to all animals and no doubt depends on the common physiological nature of nervous systems." Every living thing has rhythms. Beat is a predictive action of the brain. We anticipate the beat.

As to "Creative aging," how can music benefit our health as we age? In Parkinson's patients, dopamine-producing cells die, creating motor deficits like tremors, shuffling, loss of facial expression. Dr. Patel showed a segment of a video demonstrating that a patient who could barely walk, walked very well when walking to music. She walked to the beat. He showed a segment of "Capturing Grace," a film that depicts a group of Parkinson's patients dancing beautifully to music. One patient dancing to music with this therapist made her feel "able to fly in an organized pattern." A third video segment showed a parrot dancing to music. This is about connecting sound to movement. Dancing to music strengthens brain connections important to fluid movement.

Musical memory survives when other types of memory fail. Think of the alphabet song. "Alive Inside" is a film showing the power of musical memory in patients with dementia. An Alzheimer's patient who's been in a nursing home for 10 years, is unable to speak, hardly functioning and doesn't recognize anyone is given an iPod with his favorite music and becomes animated and sings along. Patel describes music's strong link to autobiographical memory. Songs take you right back to what you were doing, with whom, and what you felt. Memory conversion zones in the brain process music and memory. This is one of the last brain regions to atrophy in Alzheimer's patients. The brain can develop alternative pathways when conventional pathways are blocked.

Finally, musical training enhances language processing. Patients with aphasia can sometimes sing old songs fluently, and songs can be harnessed to help speech.



The Volunteer Council for the National Symphony Orchestra

2017-2018

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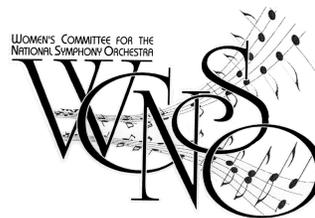
ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER COUNCIL

Formerly the Women's Committee for the National Symphony Orchestra . .

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

Today, the Council is open to women and men and is one of the leading orchestra volunteer organizations in the United States. The Council is associated with the

American Symphony
Orchestra League and
the Association of
Major Symphony
Orchestra Volunteers.



Activities include music education for children, audience development, and membership events. Membership is open to anyone who shares a love of music, music education, and an interest in the National Symphony Orchestra.