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Saturday, December 9, 2023

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Saturday, February 3, 2024



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Saturday, March 9, 2024

Concert Opera Heritage

Saturday, April 27, 2024



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Wow, what a week we're having!!!!

That was a modified cute line from an early 1980s Tom Hanks movie – “Splash” – which also introduced Daryl Hannah as a “mermaid.” It also co-starred Eugene Levy as a marine biologist who was obsessed with finding, capturing and studying the “mermaid” and had one physical mishap after another befall him in his quest. I think his last scenes in the movie were played out in a full bodycast while exclaiming, “Oy, what a week I’m having!”

I think of various movie scenes often as my own life sometimes seems to replicate so many of them in the midst of keeping an amazing symphony orchestra alive and pushing on to the next giant triumph!

And the last two weeks – since Saturday, October 28th – truly resembled that pithy little comedic movie line in so many ways!

We opened the 2023-24 CHSO concert season on that Saturday with the first concert of our Homefield Jazz Series at the newly refurbished and reopened Sorrento in Milford. The restaurant looks GREAT! The food is still GREAT! And the music and performance of Claflin Hill’s own Milford Home Grown Jazz Trio with guest Bill Fanning on trumpet was PHENOMENAL. I spent the evening enjoying their performance from the back of the room, thinking about what a great week I was about to have with the opening of CHSO the next Saturday night – rehearsing through the week with our amazing orchestra on some of my favorite musical masterworks – kicking it all off that evening with truly world-class jazz right there in my favorite restaurant!!!

Well! Life is what happens while we're busy making plans!

Our Principal Oboist suddenly had to excuse herself from the concert week cycle, due to a suddenly planned health procedure that could not be delayed! That happened four days before the first rehearsal, but she was able to arrange for our previous long time Principal Oboist – Kyoko Hida-Battaglia from the first 15 years of CHSO to come in on short notice to fill in on a truly monumental and challenging program! Kyoko emailed me to say she at first wanted to say NO, but decided she really wanted to come back and see us all again and that it was a “WICKED” program!!

We had to move our Tuesday rehearsal that week to the Milford High School – thank yous to Nadine Pomeroy (MHS) and Chris Burns (Milford Community Use Program) for being so helpful and accommodating! However, the High School Auditorium has a totally different acoustic than Town Hall, so even though we would rehearse

that night, much of what we worked on would have to be re-addressed when we finally convened on Thursday in our own Hall. (We ONLY rehearse 3 times at most for any of our CHSO concert programs! It's all about the budget, plus it keeps us on the edge!!!).

Our Charter Member Principal Flautist – Phyllis Aronson – around whom much of the program had been built – had an accident on Tuesday afternoon, injured her hand and COULD NOT play or hold her flute. She had to excuse herself from the first rehearsal and hope for a speedy recovery by Thursday. Assistant Principal (also a very tenured member) Lori Halt got a call from me at 5 PM Tuesday, letting her know about Phyllis and that I needed her to cover the First Flute parts in the rehearsal! PRESSURE! (Lori did GREAT!).

Oh, and our Concertmaster – the most important member of the entire string family – almost like the CEO of a company – had be absent on Tuesday because his young son had had a tonsillectomy that afternoon and he needed to be home to provide fatherly comfort.

On Thursday morning, while I was in the midst of setting up the entire Town Hall – orchestra set-up, audience seating, concession area – I received an email from our Substitute Second Bassoonist – who had just suffered a major extended family tragedy involving loss of life and serious injury. She was on her way to New Hampshire to gather her oldest son to bring home and still planned to be at rehearsal, although she would most likely be crying through most of her playing. (She told me afterwards that she DID cry, but felt so much better for being there together with her family of orchestra colleagues and playing music that was so sublime).

It was a program purposely designed to be that kind of “sublime.” I wanted a CHSO Season Opener that would be calming, reflective, contemplative, uplifting and ultimately inspiring, refreshing and optimistic.

But it was also a program that turned out be very complex for the orchestra – a combination of very ethereal and dynamic but mentally and physically exhausting playing. It was harder than I remembered it being or thought it would be – something I usually realize about a week and a half before the concert, but by then there's nowhere to go but forward with determination! Our musicians often tell me they think I'm crazy and they may be right. But it's that kind of “crazy” that drives us to work harder as an orchestral unit that becomes a “band of brothers and sisters.”

Suffice it to say, the CHSO does what it ALWAYS does. They worked harder every minute of every rehearsal. We solved problems, clarified

phrasings and SHAPED an entire musical story tableau through the successive pieces of the program that would elevate our audience and ourselves. Phyllis recovered, came in on Thursday as if she hadn't missed a moment. Kyoko sang her heart out on the oboe, the Bolero which features almost every single instrument in the orchestra was a moment for all of us to regale in the next solo of another long-time colleague – smiling and grinning to each other and to me – as each solo built the long mantra to its climax.

Our concert on Saturday night was an amazing triumph of will. It truly was one of our finest concerts ever – I've never felt the orchestra being so totally focused for the entire concert – it was a combination of eloquence, artistry and sheer virtuoso ensemble playing. We began with the Bach "Passacaglia and Fugue" as arranged by the legendary Leopold Stokowski. There can no more fitting way to launch a new season than with the divinely inspired music of the "Father of All Western Music" and it comes with a huge responsibility to be true to his genius.

Our audience was enveloped, embraced and touched to the core by their orchestra's heartfelt and heroic musical homilies and as we exited the Town Hall that night into the brisk late autumn air, it was if we had just been sanctified and renewed – ready to start again tomorrow.

We have spent almost twenty-five years building this orchestra and this communal culture to its present awe inspiring state and there have already been so many nights like this past Saturday night, and so sudden unexpected challenges in the midst of other plans and yet – the resilience and the inner strength of all of us ultimately brings us through to triumphant human accomplishment and inner peace. Just as our forebears did through fabled times of challenge – it is in our blood to carry on their legacy.

Clafin Hill Symphony as a community cultural aspect is an inspiration and an example for all of us – but one that needs our care and support.

Many generations have started similar cultural edifices in years past in Milford, only to let them eventually wither and die.

Let's not allow that sad legacy to claim another statistic.

Join US now in support of CHSO, in support of our Heritage, in support of Legacy and in support of the Future.

Thank you and Happy Thanksgiving.

Paul

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Saturday, December 9, 2023

7:30 p.m.

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Featuring The Blackstone Valley String Quartet

Saturday, November 18, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

- Borodin String Quartet No. 2
- Bohemian Rhapsody
- Mozart Quartet No. 22
- Bad Guy by Billie Eilish as arranged by the Vitamin String Quartet
- Ravel String Quartet in F

The Clafin Hill Chamber Series launches another season by presenting the Blackstone Valley String Quartet – whose members are all from the CHSO – as they present a program featuring string quartets from Mozart to Modern Pop Covers. The string quartet – long considered to be the premier ensemble genre in chamber music – has made a big comeback in popular culture in recent years with many quartets performing covers of current popular music. Along with a couple of BVQ favorite pop covers, the program will feature great string quartet repertoire from Ravel, Borodin and Mozart. A refreshing take on a venerable form!



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www.clafinhill.org

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This program is supported in part by the Grafton Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

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[Rock of Ages,](#)
[Saturday, November 18th at 7:30 p.m..](#)

Kicking off our 24th Season!

I remember the very first Claflin Hill Symphony concert.

Sunday evening. May 7, 2000.

It was warm. Unseasonably warm.

I had been taking bass clarinet lessons from Paul at the Indian Hill School of Music— just a half mile from my house in Littleton.

Every Wednesday afternoon, I would put together my horn and play while Paul offered his suggestions so that the sounds I made were more like music than noise.

Week after week, I showed up and so did he.

I had started lessons in January of 1999. A year and a half in, Paul mentioned a foundation that he had created— The Claflin Hill Music Performance Foundation, Inc. a nonprofit, that raised money to support summer concerts.

I had been to one of those concerts at Milford Town Park. The Milford Concert Band played while kids paraded around and parents sat in lawn chairs or on blankets enjoying a free night of music.

Then, sometime during the third semester of lessons, Paul talked about an opportunity to launch a symphony orchestra. The Worcester State College Chorus was going to perform Carmina Burana.

‘Cool!’ I thought, having NO idea what that was.

Paul may have hummed the opening notes, and I probably responded, “Oh, I do know that.”

That’s how it’s been these past 24 years. Paul programs pieces and I get to know them. My musical knowledge expands. Often pairing familiar pieces with lesser known works, I have become more versed in symphonic music.

I don’t usually remember the names of the symphonies or operas or even their composers, but having experienced these master works played live by the musicians that I have come to know and love colors my life in ways that are hard to measure but fill me with appreciation and gratitude.

If you’re reading this, you, too, value this talented group of musicians and the nonprofit that makes each concert possible. Please join me in supporting The Claflin Hill Symphony Orchestra.

[Click here to donate NOW! Thanks so much.](#)





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The Claflin Hill – Apple Tree Arts Chamber Music Series

“String Quartet – Rock of Ages!”

Saturday, November 18, 2023 7:30 PM

The Great Hall; One Grafton Common

The Blackstone Valley String Quartet

Arielle Cady Flores, Violin

Zachary Surapine, Violin

Sylvia DiCrescentis, Viola

Jamie Thiesing & Eleanor Blake, Cello

PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 4, K. 157 **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

- I. Allegro
- II. Larghetto
- III. Menuetto and trio

Bohemian Rhapsody

Performing Artist, Queen
Songwriter, Freddie Mercury
Arranged by Sylvia DiCrescentis

String Quartet No. 2 in D Major **Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)**

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Scherzo
- III. Notturmo
- IV. Finale

INTERMISSION

Bad Guy

Performing Artist, Billie Eilish
Songwriters, Billie Eilish and Finneas O’Connell
Arranged by the Vitamin String Quartet

String Quartet in F Major, M. 35 **Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Assez vif
- III. Très lent
- IV. Vif et agité

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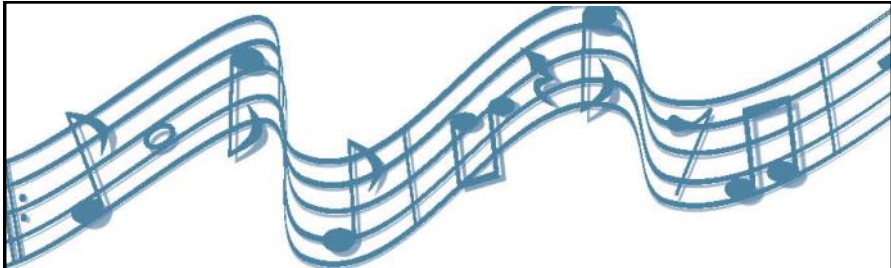


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That is a major and significant investment in the startup of a movement and idea that they believed could take root and growth in our community.

A major and significant investment that we all would hope will be remembered, celebrated and appreciated as future generations come up to enjoy and participate in the cultural edifice that we built together.

One way of insuring that both the organization that we gave birth to, that we built and our significant role in its creation is to explore the avenue of Legacy Planned Giving.

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Ask your Financial Planner how you can institute Claflin Hill Legacy Giving as a part of your future bequests. If you don't have a Financial Planner, we have several friends of Claflin Hill, (who are themselves Chair Donors), who can assist you through the process.

For more information, please visit www.claflinhill.org and choose 'DaVinci Society' under *Donate & Support* or call 508.478.5924. Thank you!



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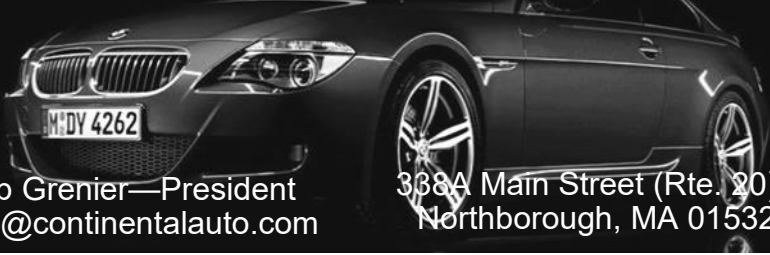
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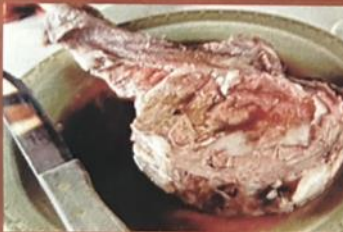
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