

PRELUDE



Vol. XLVIII, No. 6, February, 2021 Eugene Symphony Guild Newsletter

Mission Statement: The Eugene Symphony Guild supports the Eugene Symphony Association through fundraising, community education, and volunteer services.

GOOD NEWS from Music in the Garden Committee

The Eugene Symphony Guild Music in the Garden Committee for 2021, held it's first meeting on January 11, via ZOOM.

There was lively discussion among participants as to whether the Guild should proceed in planning a "normal" Music in the Garden Event, with various safety precautions in place, such as social distancing, reduced numbers of garden visitors and absence of food and beverages.

Two other possible scenarios were also deliberated: 1) a *hybrid* Music in the Garden, using both video presentation as well as a scaled down in-person portion; or 2) a purely "*virtual*" event, using video of the gardens, along with interviews and music.

A vote was taken, and it was decided that the *totally virtual version* would be the safest option, given the current Pandemic conditions. This recommendation was unanimously approved by the Guild Board at their meeting on January 13.

The Music in the Garden Committee is very excited to be moving forward with this new format. We are asking our Committee members for their thoughts and ideas on how to implement this, so we can make timely decisions and make this years Music in the Garden a resounding success.

Please stay tuned for updates, as we forge ahead on this exciting project!

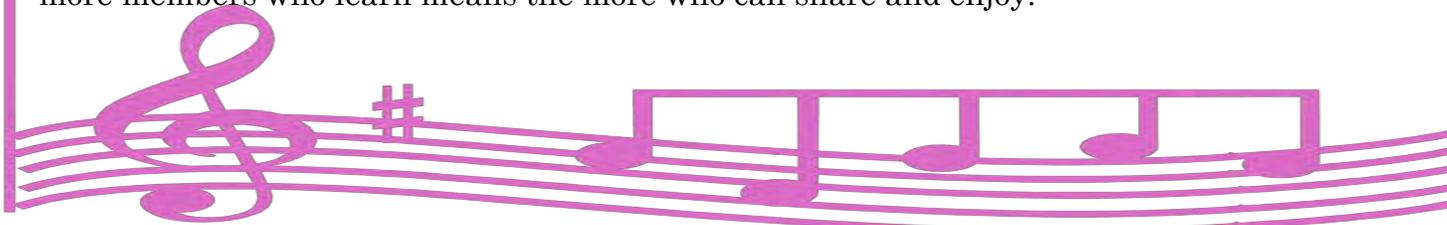
Sally Robinson

* * * * * Happy Valentine's Day * * * * *

Eugene Symphony Guild Meetings:

Board meeting: February 10, at 10 a.m. social time, meeting time at 10:30 a.m. (via ZOOM).

Membership meeting: February 17, at 10 a.m. social time, 10:30 a.m. meeting, (via ZOOM). Plus, guest artist Michael Gu, 1st Place scholarship winner in our Young Artist Competition. Help is available to get started with the ZOOM connections, and the more members who learn means the more who can share and enjoy.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear members,

The arrival of February is a time for optimism. The days are starting to get longer, and we can look forward to more mild, sunny days. In my yard I can see blooming primrose

and hellebores as well as the swelling buds of snowdrops and emerging leaves of daffodils.

The song sparrows in the tree near my bird feeders are singing their spring songs, and the male resident hummingbird is doing his acrobatic flight display. Yes, spring is coming. It is time to order seeds for the vegetable garden and do whatever yard and garden cleanup didn't get done in the fall. How wonderful to observe these signs and anticipate the beauty and bounty to come.

Yes, spring is on the way, bringing a sense of renewed hope and energy. Our Guild is springing into action with energy and optimism, planning on an exciting new version of Music in the Garden. Read what has been written about our plans. Ginger is looking for new ways to have our Musical Chairs parties, so please bring your ideas to her. At our next general meeting, on Wednesday, February 17, we look forward to seeing more and more faces. I know many of you are familiar with Zoom, and if not, there is still plenty of time to learn. Our Board members are eager to help you – just call and ask. We miss you and want to see you. At this meeting, we will have a chance to hear one of our Young Artist Competition winners – a most talented young pianist.

Our Eugene Symphony is also planning for spring with optimism. Francesco, Scott and Company are planning some live performances this spring, in a different venue, with a smaller audience and orchestra. Francesco has big ideas for the time when we can return to the Hult Center for performances – I am sure you all are, as well. With the new scholarship program getting underway, and other outreach programs, we are keeping music alive in the schools and community.

Let's welcome and enjoy the signs of the coming spring and join the planning of our fundraising events. Stay well, everyone. See you on the 17th!

Sandra

P.S.

During our February 17 general meeting, we will hear a recording of pianist Michael Gu – our first place scholarship winner in our Young Artist Competition. Join us – you won't want to miss this opportunity to hear an amazing young pianist.



Guild Groups and Activities

Weekly Walking Hour is scheduled for these Tuesday mornings from 9:30-10:30 a.m., February 2, 9, 16, and 23. If you are new to the group, please call Nancy Holloman to be added to the email notification of the starting point. Walks begin in different places each week and are usually on level ground. The group is currently alternating city street walks with nature walks. Participants have been planning delightful walks in their own neighborhoods.

The **Guild Book Club** meets via Zoom the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.. Anyone who is interested in participating should call Sue Ashton. In February, Monday the 8th, members will discuss *One By One* by Ruth Ware. Here are the remaining selections through June:

March- *Code Name Helene* by Ariel Lawhon

April- *Desert Flower* by Waris Dirie

May- *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins

June- *The Evening and the Morning* by Ken Follett

Address update: Judy England's email address has been updated in the current membership book, but if some are using older books please know the corrected email is: judyengland22@gmail.com. Thank you! Ed.

A FORMER MEMBER'S GIFT

If you were a member in the 1990's you might remember Letha Lisa Gardner. Letha is a long-time member who evidently moved to Florida somewhere in the mid 90's.

A month or so ago we received an email from Letha thru our website. She introduced herself and said how much she had enjoyed the Guild when she lived in Eugene. She had a photo album from her active years which she would send us if we were interested!

We received the album recently along with a Christmas Card with the following message:

"The Symphony Guild made my Christmas Season very special for many years.

Many of my memories are in this book. Enjoy".
Signed Letha M. Lisa Gardner. The book is mainly photos of members at Christmas Tours and parties.

Sylvia Kaufman (Historian) will be the keeper of the album. When we can all meet in person again she will bring it to a meeting. Until then, please contact Sylvia if you would like to look at it sooner.

Carolyn Abbott

Here are two welcome signs of Spring: *Snowdrops* on the left and *Winter Aconites*, on the right, from Sally Robinson's beautiful garden.



Eugene Symphony Guild History 1985-1996

by Melva Boles

Adrian Gnam began his tenure as Conductor of the Symphony for four seasons. In September of 1985, Guild members were invited to bring a salad and a friend to a *Curtain Call Luncheon* on the Silva Hall stage where Maestro Gnam introduced himself and the year of music ahead. In September of 1986, the Guild and the Eugene Parks and Recreation Department held an “*Old-fashioned Garden Party*” in the Owens Rose Garden to celebrate the completion of a \$110,000 garden improvement project. The Eugene Symphony Brass Quintet played beneath the Owens cherry tree, and Guild members sold Symphony season tickets, cookbooks, and stationary as well as provided refreshments. In October of 1986, the Guild organized the Eugene Symphony’s *20th Birthday Bash*; a benefit dinner with music, dancing and a silent auction at the Hilton Hotel. *Musical Chair Parties* were well underway by 1987. In January 1988, Guild member Betty Lou Snyder organized the first of many “Guild” musically oriented tours. A *Southern Symphonic Odyssey* included a trip to Charleston, South Carolina and the Spoleto Festival.

In 1989, Marin Alsop became the fourth conductor of the Symphony. She was with the Eugene Symphony for seven years through Spring of 1996.



At right, proud members present \$60,000 check to the Symphony Association- [Marilyn Scherer (1995-1996) far right front row.]

The 1990 Symphony Guild Tour, *Adirondacks/Berkshires in Concert*, included performances at Tanglewood as well as a delightful dinner at the home of Marin’s parents, Lamar and Ruth, where Guild members got to ride with Marin in a 1931 Model A Ford that had been given to her by her father. The *Listening Series* continued in a larger venue, and a new endeavor *The Children’s Corner* enlisted young parents and children ages 3-7 to explore music. In January 1996, an *Ode to Joy* dinner and program was presented by the Guild to honor the Eugene Symphony’s 30th Anniversary, and in February of 1996, the Guild gifted the Symphony with a \$60,000 contribution. From September 5-10, 1996, *Marin Alsop and String Fever at Sea* sailed on the Queen Elizabeth from New York to England. Thirty-six Guild travelers were aboard, and proceeds from the trip netted the Symphony Guild over \$8,000. *String Fever*, founded by Marin in 1981, had a distinctive blend of swing, pop, jazz and classical repertoire. Marin played violin with the group.

For those of you interested in Marin’s career, she became the first female conductor and Music Director of a major American orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony, in 2007. Her tenure as Musical Director ended this year. In an NPR interview with Paul Simon in April of 2020, Marin announced that she will conduct several concerts a year with the Baltimore Symphony but is looking forward to exploring opera as well as other projects. Marin is also the chief conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Kay Warner (Hanson) (Guild President 1990-1991), Paula Salerno (1992-1992) celebrate presidency of Christine Hogan (1991-1992) along with Doren Kilen, in the middle to the right. Can anyone identify the other two Guild Members? (photo on left)





Tots to 10 Music Exploration program
(left)

Adirondacks/Berkshires in Concert (1990)
Guild Tour: Betty Lou Snyder, Guild planner of the trips is in the front row next to (I think) Lamar and Ruth Alsop, Marin Alsop in print pants, white top, standing next to her antique vehicle, and numerous Guild members. Did you attend and if so, do you recognize yourself in this picture? (below)



Connie Regali, (Guild president 1989-1990), Doreen Kilen and Cyndy Lane (Guild president 1986-1987) serving at a Christmas Walk. (right)



Behind the Curtain — Symphony News



Greetings, Guild members,

As I write today, there are a panoply of questions on both the national and state levels that have an impact on us here locally in Eugene, and further on our plans for the Eugene Symphony's upcoming

activities. These include:

Here in Oregon, one of the things we are working on is to convince Gov. Brown's office that performing arts venues such as the Hult Center should be allowed to be used as recording studios if no public audience is present. (Currently all activity in 'indoor entertainment establishments' is prohibited, which we believe is an overly broad brush.) This afternoon I will participate in a conference call with members of her team, representing the Symphony, other performing arts groups, and the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of which I am a board member. Fingers are crossed that we can make some headway and be able to create new content at the Hult for online streaming.

In the meantime, we are moving forward with other plans that are allowable at other types of venues, including a video version of our *Symphony Connect* string quartet program that has visited human service agencies in our area over the past four years or so. This adaptation will be recorded at Temple Beth Israel in Eugene, and will be shared via online streaming in early February.

Then, we envision string orchestra performances involving perhaps twenty players or so in February and March, led by Francesco and recorded either at the Temple or the Hult Center if allowable by then, to be streamed in March and April respectively.

And we are also building toward larger ensembles later in the spring, and are developing several different versions of what a 2021/22 concert season might look like – depending of course on public health conditions at the time.

Like many people, I was shocked and saddened by the violence that overtook our nation's capitol on January 6, and am hopeful that the divisiveness and vitriol that fueled it may begin to fade soon – and pray that we don't see more violence in the coming days...

Suffice it to say we have had our hands full, planning and re-planning, but let me assure you that even in the darkest hours of our current situation, we have never lost our sense of optimism, nor our belief in the potent power of music to bring us closer together. We must always look ahead and believe that the future holds promise.

Thank you as always for everything you do for the Guild, the Eugene Symphony, and this remarkable and resilient community.

My best,
Scott

Scott Freck
Executive Director
Eugene Symphony
Association



Karen Olsen, Musical Theater Teacher With Her Students, Share Talents During Pandemic

We have a lot of special members in the Symphony Guild, who do a lot of interesting things in the community. Karen Olsen has been a member of the Guild since 1997. Many of you probably know her in one of her many roles around Lane County. You probably had a child or a grandchild or know someone that had her as a teacher at McCornack Elementary School where she has been teaching for thirty years. Karen is considered the historian of the school as she has been there the longest even though she is not the oldest.

When I moved into Quail Run, I was lucky enough to find out that Karen was my neighbor. My cousin, who now lives in Hawaii, told me that his kids had her as a fifth-grade teacher and that she was the best teacher they ever had. Karen has taught at McCornack since 1989 – mostly fifth grade. In 2011 she was awarded Oregon History Teacher of the Year. Her resume goes on for pages filled with grants and awards. Lane County is lucky to have such a dedicated and accomplished teacher.

Ever since Karen was a little girl, she participated in musicals with her mother, Meribeth Olsen, who many of you knew from the Guild and other local organizations. Meribeth was a first-grade teacher at Howard Elementary for many years and put on large productions. Karen would always play the piano for her mom during these musical events. Karen has been rehearsal and orchestral pianist for several local theatres including at L.C.C., Actors Cabaret, Very Little Theatre, and the U. of O.'s Carnival Theatre. She did Summer Theatre on the Mall years ago when Willamette Street was turned into a pedestrian mall. I asked Karen the casual question of when she got started with musical theatre and in return learned much of the history of musical theatre in Eugene.

Karen's mother loved musicals and so her only child grew up singing, playing and memorizing many musicals. That has not stopped. Karen has also written three musicals; two are based on American history and one on world history. When she first arrived at McCornack the music teacher asked her to direct a show where the entire school, Kindergarten to Fifth Grade would be in it. Of course, she could not say no. She has been

directing shows at McCornack ever since.

Karen loves teaching, kids, world travel, history, and directing musicals. In December 2019, before the pandemic, a director of Rose Children's Theater asked Karen to take over and direct sixty-five kids in the production of "*Cinderella*." She told me that during that experience, "she met some wonderful kids and bonded with them and their families." Thank goodness final performances happened right before COVID-19 hit.

As "*Cinderella*" was wrapping up, she was also producing the fifth grade musical, "*Oliver*." COVID came and production stopped. Some of her older "*Cinderella*" cast members, who had also volunteered to take on older roles in her "*Oliver*" production started checking in with Karen by ZOOM and just wanted to stay in touch during the rest of the school year. When summer arrived they really wanted to do some kind of play. When all other productions were closed across the country due to COVID, Karen was determined to work with these talented teens on a new musical. They decided on the play "*You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*" with a small cast of seven. They met three times each week, which gave the kids and Karen something to look forward to in this time of isolation. These students were from schools all over Lane County, ranging in ages from fourteen to eighteen and continued to build a tight knit bond.

Before the end of summer, they were able to rent a small local theatre and perform "*Charlie Brown*" for family and friends. They felt so good about their final accomplishment they were more than happy to continue performing, but where would that be during a pandemic? Outdoors would be the only safe place. Summer was coming to a close and school was starting up. Karen made it quite clear that schoolwork came first, but she was happy to get the show on the road to provide a little fun for our community – something many people craved.

Karen had booked her compact production into the gated community of Quail Run. One of the courtyards set up socially distanced chairs for some of the delighted residents who were grateful to enjoy some entertainment.

[Continued, page 8, photos on page 9]

Karen Olsen, Musical Theater Teacher (Continued,)

Word spread about this little troupe and they received invitations from the Oakway Mall and Fifth Street Market. The kids were in demand. However, when the Labor Day fires happened, all future performances were put on hold. Two of the cast members lived in evacuation zones, so all were concerned for their safety. Thankfully, conditions slowly eased, the quality of air improved and they were able to perform once again at local outdoor venues.

They did find it quite challenging at Fifth Street Market. During their 90 minute performance they were interrupted by a record-breaking five noisy trains. Actors just put their show on pause each time. Everyone was patient with the final result being extended by an hour.

The cast wrapped up their final performance in the little town of Gates on the Santiam Highway, about a two hour drive north of Eugene. They wanted to bring a little joy to families who lost their homes in the Beachie Creek Fire. They performed in the parking lot of the Gates Community Church, right at the edge of the fire that miraculously stopped next to the church.

When “*Charlie Brown*” was finished, Karen’s actors didn’t blink an eye when they asked Karen what the next show was going to be. They had some musical movie watch parties. When Karen showed them the movie “*Singin’ In the Rain*,” she noticed that they were laughing throughout the movie and realized that this show was just what they all needed. Finding laughter during a pandemic is great medicine to keep everyone happy and maintain some sanity.

Under normal circumstances, “*Singin’ in the Rain*” calls for a cast of 24 speaking parts and a large ensemble, which would be lots of fun if school was in session, but COVID restrictions prevail. Creativity has been the rage over at Karen’s home these past months. Her cast of seven has grown to nine. When I asked her how on Earth she could pull this large show off going from twenty-four to nine she said, “I have a very talented crew of kids. Some of these actors are on their fourth show with me. Most of the cast are playing multiple parts. They are planning quick changes of hats, wigs, props, and double-sided wrap around skirts!”

Two of these students are seniors, and the high schools represented are Cottage Grove, Thurston,

Springfield, Marist, Churchill, South Eugene, and two are home-schooled. These students are multi-talented singers, dancers and actors, so they are taking this latest theatrical challenge in stride. Karen is also grateful for a couple of very able helpers with these productions. Her choreographer, Adam Kelly, is often seen in Shedd musicals, and teaches dance with two local dance companies. He is an extraordinary tap dancer and really knows how to get kids feet moving! Vocal director, Jeanette Engel, has also been a loyal member of these musical endeavors and a member of the Guild.

An extra perk for Karen working with these awesome students is that some of them have also been earning community service by recording themselves reading books that Karen then uses in her online instruction during her distance learning ZOOM classes. Two of the boys have recorded over 80 books so far and counting. They use their acting skills by creating fun voices. They especially enjoyed reading fairy tales which were rich with wildly funny characters and vocal expressions. It has been a win/win for Karen, the teens and her fifth graders. Needless to say these high school storytellers have become very popular with her students!

In normal times, pre-COVID, Karen has taken groups of students on an eight-day East Coast trip for the past 24 years. It is a trip mainly to see the historical sights in Washington D.C., Philadelphia and New York. After all, she is a history nerd, loves teaching history, and a board member of the Lane County History Museum. At the end of the trip there are always two nights in New York and attendance of shows on Broadway. The kids love it and so do the parent chaperones. Some of her kids would like to be Broadway bound. Someday we may say that they got their start right here in Eugene!

When I asked Karen why she has continued with musical theatre during the pandemic, given that it was so hard arranging it all, she said “Musical theater is something fun that everyone can look forward too, and musical theatre is in our blood!”

I know we will all want to see these talented kids perform.

By Karalyn Walker Sprung [See photos page 9\]](#)

Photos of Karen Olsen's Theater Presentations



"You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" Cast on the left.
Below is Cinderella and Prince Charming in
"Cinderella"



Cast of "Cinderella" on the left above
and at bottom right is a dance
rehearsal.



A look back at Guild 2020 activities has been compiled and is available for review by emailing Carolyn Abbott, cjabbott2@comcast.net. It is a 3-1/2 page document covering events occurring before and after COVID-19's impact on our events and activities.

Because of it's length, it is not being published in the *Prelude* but is definitely intended to be reviewed by any member who is interested.

The History was put together mainly for the purpose of documenting the reasons the Guild functioned in such an unusual manner in 2020. Future Boards and Members may not realize the restrictions we were under and the impact COVID had on us as a fundraising, crowd gathering organization.

Our Guild Historian, Sylvia Kaufman, will be the custodian of the "official" document and it will be a part of our 2020 scrapbook. Again, email or call Carolyn Abbott for your own personal emailed copy." Ed.

Feel free to print a copy of the Prelude when it is delivered to your email for future reference. Current and past issues of the Prelude can be found on the Guild website, <https://eugenesymphonyguild.org/membership/newsletter> Editor: Judy England



Eugene Symphony Guild
115 West 8th Avenue, Ste. 115
Eugene, Oregon 97401



February

“Classical music is no longer an extravagance but a life necessity.”

Pianist Igor Levit on “60 Minutes”