

Noteworthy

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Seasonal Goodies Sure to Delight

By Michelle d'Arcy

For regular listeners of National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, one time-honored and much anticipated tradition occurs on the Friday before Thanksgiving when Special Correspondent Susan Stamberg shares her mother-in-law's unconventional recipe for cranberry relish with its tart and piquant taste. The recipe has the cranberries and sugar for sure, but then it's tarted-up with onion, sour cream and — wait for it — horseradish! Are WMMC members brave enough to try it? For the fearless, we include the recipe here:

Mama Stamberg's cranberry relish

2 cups raw cranberries — washed
1 small onion
½ cup sugar
¾ cup sour cream
2 T. horseradish

Grind the cranberries and onion together (I use an old-fashioned meat grinder, but you can use a processor — just keep pieces chunky). Add everything else. Mix. Put in a container and freeze. On Thanksgiving morning, move the relish from the freezer to the refrigerator compartment, to thaw. It will be thick, creamy, chunky, and shocking pink*. Makes 1 and ½ pints.

Another treasured NPR vignette is Austin's own John Henry Faulk's (1913 – 1990) seasonal rendition of his delightful "Christmas Story." Kicking off our Holiday Coffee program will be a reading of Faulk's tale. Again, from the NPR archives: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5028755>.

Many native Texans, and even some Austinites, are unfamiliar with Faulk—American storyteller, author, humorist, and radio host. Faulk was a champion of free speech and civil liberty, and his successful lawsuit against the entertainment industry during the McCarthy era helped to bring an end to the scourge of blacklisting of artists, writers, political scientists, philosophers, and journalists — among countless others. Faulk's Austin connections were legendary (why the original library downtown was so named); his relation to Green Pastures, now Mattie's (<https://mattiesaustin.com/green-pastures>); his friendships with Mollie Ivins and Cactus Pryor and many others. For more, see: <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/faulk-john-henry>.

John Henry Faulk's nieces—WMMC's own Carol Koock and her sister, Austin treasure Martha Koock Ward—will be on hand for our holiday merrymaking on December 1. While researching the Faulk/Koock family, I stumbled across an interview Martha did for the HBCU's (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) *Truth & Reconciliation Oral History Project* about three years ago. It provides some excellent background and outlines the history of this family and their place not only in Texas history, but nationwide as well. Martha's interview can be found at: <https://hbcuoralhistoryvideoproject.org/2019/12/18015-kooch-ward-martha/>. She will be my guest at the December 1st Holiday Coffee.



President's Message

Sarah Harriman

Greetings All,

Seems like we just had our November meeting and now it's time to celebrate Thanksgiving and to think about the holidays.

Speaking of that, our **December 1** meeting at First UUC will feature holiday music and visiting beginning at **9:30 in the sanctuary**. Not sure what surprise the hospitality committee will have in store because the church will allow no food or drink in the building until Austin is at level 2.

Just a reminder to be thinking about how you think we should celebrate our centennial in 2023. We want your ideas so we can create a plan. It would be great to have your ideas by the end of December, but really I'll take them whenever you can get them to me. We'd like to start planning in early 2022. Thanks for being willing to share.

Sarah

Poetry Corner

Many thanks to Kathryn Govier, who shared this Thanksgiving poem with us.

A Harvest of People by Max Coots

Let us give thanks for a bounty of people:

For generous friends, with smiles as bright as their blossoms.

For feisty friends as tart as apples;

For continuous friends who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we've had them.

For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;

For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row of corn; and the others as plain as potatoes and as good for you.

For friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley, as endless as zucchini, and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to see you through the winter.

For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time.

For young friends, who wind around like tendrils and hold us.

We give thanks for friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, but who fed us in their times that we might live.

The Reverend Max Coots (1927-2009) served UU congregations in Upstate New York. He started his career as a Universalist minister, decades before the 1961 merger between the Universalists and the Unitarian denominations into the UUA.

For Your Shopping Pleasure (by Marcia Edwards, TFMC Insignia Chair)

There will be musical holiday gifts and TFMC/NFMC pins for sale at our Holiday Coffee on Wednesday, Dec. 1. Be sure to stop by the gift table and see if anything catches your fancy. You may discover a gift for yourself or for someone else on your holiday shopping list. Note: this is not a fundraiser; it's meant to be a fun-raiser!

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Gloria in Excel sheets

2004 Welcome address to freshman parents at Boston Conservatory, given by Dr. Karl Paulnack, pianist and Director of Music Division at Boston Conservatory

Many thanks to Beth Moreno who brought this eloquent welcome address for parents and students at the Boston Conservatory by Dr. Karl Paulnack to our attention. Beth observes: "It is the most beautiful justification of music (and music as a career) that I think I have ever encountered." Beth especially notes the connection that Dr. Paulnack makes between the Greeks' understanding of astronomy and its relationship to music, as well as the image of the musician as a healer. We greatly appreciate the author's gracious permission to reprint his welcome address in our newsletter.

"One of my parents' deepest fears, I suspect, is that society would not properly value me as a musician, that I wouldn't be appreciated. I had very good grades in high school, I was good in science and math, and they imagined that as a doctor or a research chemist or an engineer, I might be more appreciated than I would be as a musician. I still remember my mother's remark when I announced my decision to apply to music school-she said, "you're WASTING your SAT scores." On some level, I think, my parents were not sure themselves what the value of music was, what its purpose was. And they LOVED music, they listened to classical music all the time. They just weren't really clear about its function. So let me talk about that a little bit, because we live in a society that puts music in the "arts and entertainment" section of the newspaper, and serious music, the kind your kids are about to engage in, has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with entertainment, in fact it's the opposite of entertainment. Let me talk a little bit about music, and how it works.

The first people to understand how music really works were the ancient Greeks. And this is going to fascinate you; the Greeks said that music and astronomy were two sides of the same coin. Astronomy was seen as the study of relationships between observable, permanent, external objects, and music was seen as the study of relationships between invisible, internal, hidden objects. Music has a way of finding the big, invisible moving pieces inside our hearts and souls and helping us figure out the position of things inside us. Let me give you some examples of how this works.

One of the most profound musical compositions of all time is the Quartet for the End of Time written by French composer Olivier Messiaen in 1940. Messiaen was 31 years old when France entered the war against Nazi Germany. He was captured by the Germans in June of 1940, sent across Germany in a cattle car and imprisoned in a concentration camp.

He was fortunate to find a sympathetic prison guard who gave him paper and a place to compose. There were three other musicians in the camp, a cellist, a violinist, and a clarinetist, and Messiaen wrote his quartet with these specific players in mind. It was performed in January 1941 for four thousand prisoners and guards in the prison camp. Today it is one of the most famous masterworks in the repertoire.

Given what we have since learned about life in the concentration camps, why would anyone in his right mind waste time and energy writing or playing music? There was barely enough energy on a good day to find food and water, to avoid a beating, to stay warm, to escape torture - why would anyone bother with music? And yet - from the camps, we have poetry, we have music, we have visual art; it wasn't just this one fanatic Messiaen; many, many people created art. Why? Well, in a place where people are only focused on survival, on the bare necessities, the obvious conclusion is that art must be, somehow, essential for life. The camps were without money, without hope, without commerce, without recreation, without basic respect, but they were not without art. Art is part of survival; art is part of the human spirit, an unquenchable expression of who we are. Art is one of the ways in which we say, "I am alive, and my life has meaning."

On September 12, 2001 I was a resident of Manhattan. That morning I reached a new understanding of my art and its relationship to the world. I sat down at the piano that morning at 10 AM to practice as was my daily routine; I did it by force of habit, without thinking about it. I lifted the cover on the keyboard, and opened my music, and put my hands on the keys and took my hands off the keys. And I sat there and thought, does this even matter? Isn't this completely irrelevant?

Playing the piano right now, given what happened in this city yesterday, seems silly, absurd, irreverent, pointless. Why am I here? What place has a musician in this moment in time? Who needs a piano player right now? I was completely lost.

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And then I, along with the rest of New York, went through the journey of getting through that week. I did not play the piano that day, and in fact I contemplated briefly whether I would ever want to play the piano again. And then I observed how we got through the day.

At least in my neighborhood, we didn't shoot hoops or play Scrabble. We didn't play cards to pass the time, we didn't watch TV, we didn't shop, we most certainly did not go to the mall. The first organized activity that I saw in New York, that same day, was singing. People sang. People sang around fire houses, people sang "We Shall Overcome". Lots of people sang America the Beautiful. The first organized public event that I remember was the Brahms Requiem, later that week, at Lincoln Center, with the New York Philharmonic. The first organized public expression of grief, our first communal response to that historic event, was a concert. That was the beginning of a sense that life might go on. The US Military secured the airspace, but recovery was led by the arts, and by music in particular, that very night.

From these two experiences, I have come to understand that music is not part of "arts and entertainment" as the newspaper section would have us believe. It's not a luxury, a lavish thing that we fund from leftovers of our budgets, not a plaything or an amusement or a pass time. Music is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can't with our minds.

Some of you may know Samuel Barber's heart wrenchingly beautiful piece Adagio for Strings. If you don't know it by that name, then some of you may know it as the background music which accompanied the Oliver Stone movie Platoon, a film about the Vietnam War. If you know that piece of music either way, you know it has the ability to crack your heart open like a walnut; it can make you cry over sadness you didn't know you had. Music can slip beneath our conscious reality to get at what's really going on inside us the way a good therapist does.

I bet that you have never been to a wedding where there was absolutely no music. There might have been only a little music, there might have been some really bad music, but I bet you there was some music. And something very predictable happens at weddings - people get all pent up with all kinds of emotions, and then there's some musical moment where the action of the wedding stops and someone sings or plays the flute or something. And even if the music is lame, even if the quality isn't good, predictably 30 or 40 percent of the people who are going to cry at a wedding, cry a couple of moments after the music starts. Why? The Greeks. Music allows us to move around those big invisible pieces of ourselves and rearrange our insides so that we can express what we feel even when we can't talk about it. Can you imagine watching Indiana Jones or Superman or Star Wars with the dialogue but no music? What is it about the music swelling up at just the right moment in ET so that all the softies in the audience start crying at exactly the same moment? I guarantee you if you showed the movie with the music stripped out, it wouldn't happen that way.

The Greeks: Music is the understanding of the relationship between invisible internal objects.

I'll give you one more example, the story of the most important concert of my life. I must tell you I have played a little less than a thousand concerts in my life so far. I have played in places that I thought were important. I like playing in Carnegie Hall; I enjoyed playing in Paris; it made me very happy to please the critics in St. Petersburg. I have played for people I thought were important; music critics of major newspapers, foreign heads of state. The most important concert of my entire life took place in a nursing home in Fargo, ND, about 4 years ago.

I was playing with a very dear friend of mine who is a violinist. We began, as we often do, with Aaron Copland's Sonata, which was written during World War II and dedicated to a young friend of Copland's, a young pilot who was shot down during the war. Now we often talk to our audiences about the pieces we are going to play rather than providing them with written program notes. But in this case, because we began the concert with this piece, we decided to talk about the piece later in the program and to just come out and play the music without explanation.

Midway through the piece, an elderly man seated in a wheelchair near the front of the concert hall began to weep. This man, whom I later met, was clearly a soldier-even in his 70's, it was clear from his buzz-cut hair, square jaw and general demeanor that he had spent a good deal of his life in the military. I thought it a little bit odd that someone would be moved to tears by that particular movement of that particular piece, but it wasn't the first time I've heard crying in a concert and we went on with the concert and finished the piece.

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When we came out to play the next piece on the program, we decided to talk about both the first and second pieces, and we described the circumstances in which the Copland was written and mentioned its dedication to a downed pilot. The man in the front of the audience became so disturbed that he had to leave the auditorium. I honestly figured that we would not see him again, but he did come backstage afterwards, tears and all, to explain himself.

What he told us was this: "During World War II, I was a pilot, and I was in an aerial combat situation where one of my team's planes was hit. I watched my friend bail out, and watched his parachute open, but the Japanese planes which had engaged us returned and machine gunned across the parachute chords so as to separate the parachute from the pilot, and I watched my friend drop away into the ocean, realizing that he was lost. I have not thought about this for many years, but during that first piece of music you played, this memory returned to me so vividly that it was as though I was reliving it. I didn't understand why this was happening, why now, but then when you came out to explain that this piece of music was written to commemorate a lost pilot, it was a little more than I could handle. How does the music do that? How did it find those feelings and those memories in me?"

Remember the Greeks: music is the study of invisible relationships between internal objects. This concert in Fargo was the most important work I have ever done. For me to play for this old soldier and help him connect, somehow, with Aaron Copland, and to connect their memories of their lost friends, to help him remember and mourn his friend, this is my work. This is why music matters.

What follows is part of the talk I will give to this year's freshman class when I welcome them a few days from now. The responsibility I will charge your sons and daughters with is this: "If we were a medical school, and you were here as a med student practicing appendectomies, you'd take your work very seriously because you would imagine that some night at two AM someone is going to waltz into your emergency room and you're going to have to save their life. Well, my friends, someday at 8 PM someone is going to walk into your concert hall and bring you a mind that is confused, a heart that is overwhelmed, a soul that is weary. Whether they go out whole again will depend partly on how well you do your craft.

You're not here to become an entertainer, and you don't have to sell yourself. The truth is you don't have anything to sell; being a musician isn't about dispensing a product, like selling used Chevies. I'm not an entertainer; I'm a lot closer to a paramedic, a firefighter, a rescue worker. You're here to become a sort of therapist for the human soul, a spiritual version of a chiropractor, physical therapist, someone who works with our insides to see if they get things to line up, to see if we can come into harmony with ourselves and be healthy and happy and well.

Frankly, ladies and gentlemen, I expect you not only to master music; I expect you to save the planet. If there is a future wave of wellness on this planet, of harmony, of peace, of an end to war, of mutual understanding, of equality, of fairness, I don't expect it will come from a government, a military force or a corporation. I no longer even expect it to come from the religions of the world, which together seem to have brought us as much war as they have peace. If there is a future of peace for humankind, if there is to be an understanding of how these invisible, internal things should fit together, I expect it will come from the artists, because that's what we do. As in the concentration camp and the evening of 9/11, the artists are the ones who might be able to help us with our internal, invisible lives."

Dr. Karl Paulnack served as Director of the Music Division of The Boston Conservatory from 2002 - 2013. He recently retired from Ithaca College, where he was Professor of Performance Studies and Dean of the School of Music (2013 - 2020).

