

Noteworthy

A publication of The Wednesday Morning Music Club (Austin)

Website: musicclubaustin.org

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MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Michelle d'Arcy

"Is music coming out of the couch?" asked Father. "Yes, she's behind there playing records 'Rette gave her" said Mother "... 'Somebody Sullivan' – she keeps playing it over and over again. Goodness! Why she's not happy with her brother's 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' ... he liked it, but SHE's ..."

The child made a nest behind the sofa – replete with dozens of books, her record player, the 78's her Aunt Loretta gave her (opening her world to Gilbert and Sullivan, Caruso, Callas, and eventually, Cabellé), and an imagination gone wild. She'd hide for hours reading, writing, listening – provisioning her lair with waxed-paper squares of saltines, peanut butter, apples, and, when dark, her trusty Eveready. Thus began an enduring love affair with music, books, words, her aunt, and Peter Pan Creamy. She was an Army Brat. Each new post meant a new house, a different placement for the couch. But the girl would reconstruct her clandestine davenport atelier with ease, fast on her way to Fantasyland and all its alluring adventures. At post schools she'd become a 'discipline problem'. They didn't know what to do with her. But then, in the 1950's, discipline problems constituted the placement of one's gym shorts on Eisenhower's head. Eventually they dispatched the obstreperous teen to her birthplace of Buffalo, New York to attend a convent school ("that'll straighten her out") and to live with her Aunt 'Rette.

The nuns made negligible progress in terms of her behavior, but she was a curious student and excelled in school – save penmanship ('comportment' a lost cause), winning accolades and awards (her first short story/poetry collection published at 16), including the dubious distinction of being the first convent schooler kicked out of the National Honor Society (one prank pulled too many). It was 'Rette who carted her off to Kleinhans Music Hall (where she performed in youth concerts); introduced her to the Buffalo Philharmonic; insisted on sneaking her backstage to meet Lucas Foss, a very young Michael Tilson Thomas, Yehudi Menuhin, among others; and road-tripped her across the border to Toronto, Glenn Gould tickets in hand. She studied piano throughout her childhood (and later as an adult), but literature, classical/foreign languages, art history, and mathematics beguiled her. She matriculated at SUNY/Buffalo as a classics/literature major, eventually securing her postgraduate degree in comparative literature.

Then one day she went shopping for an iron at Goodwill. A chance encounter with a physics Ph.D. (a veritable Poirot with a penchant for the fiddle) turned her life upside down. She met her match. His name was Henri d'Arcy, and the attraction was overwhelming and immediate. The Super Collider took them to Texas where they settled in Austin. Their careers (hers in publishing) and their personal lives routinely accelerated 'random particles' to high kinetic impact. They were very happy. The cancellation of funding for the U.S. project and his relocation to CERN coincided with assignments overseas for her publishing firm: Geneva weekends? Delightful!

In the summer of 2009 she sought solace in music once again. During the second year of his extended hospice, few fleeting moments were spent at the Austin Chamber Music Center's workshops. When a tear slithered down her cheek, a spirited, bright-eyed woman by the name of Judy Trejo, slipped into the seat behind her and whispered: "Wednesday Morning Music Club is meant for you." She joined that fall, sponsored by Judy and Barbara Buttrely.

After the death of her private Paganini in 2010, a new adventure took her to Boston where she served four years as Chief Operating Officer for an upstart technology firm. After negotiating the successful sale of the company, she returned to Austin and WMMC. That is where she stays – sublimely content with music, books, writing, peanut butter, the occasional shenanigan ... trusty ... ever ... ready.

Editors: Marie White, Carolyn McColloch, Marcia Edwards



President's Message

Janie Keys

Who is Ellen Taaffe Zwilich? The program dedicated to American Women Composers began early on January 16th with a compelling presentation on Music Memory given by Mollie Tower and Debbie Tannert. The school children who participate in the Music Memory program would know the answer to the question about Ellen Zwilich. (I had to look it up.) She is an American composer, the first woman composer to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music. Program leader Angela Smith's lively and entertaining commentary reminded listeners that the works of American women composers have largely gone unrecognized and unappreciated by the general public throughout history. America's first truly successful woman composer who enjoyed widespread recognition during her lifetime is Amy Beach. Many thanks to Terri Freeland and Rachel May for bringing to our attention the beautiful *Theme and Variations for Flute and Strings*. The haunting melody that runs through it is based on one of Beach's own songs, *An Indian Lullaby*.

The compositions we heard on the program included works by our own Carlie Burdett and Ruby Jane Smith. I asked Carlie if she would share her thoughts on her composition process with the readers of Noteworthy. She was very forthcoming in her response which follows.

"I've had a love affair with poetry all my life. So, when I start to compose a piece of music, I often start with a poem that I love, and add music, with the goal being to bring the poem to a higher level of understanding or expression. Other times, I start with my own thoughts and words, and set them to music.

When I started composing, in high school, it was piano music. Many of my melodies sounded like they needed words, but I didn't have a clue how to write lyrics. Then, a poet that I met at a women's gathering at WTSU in Canyon, TX gave me a very helpful tip: to keep a pad and pencil handy and jot down anything that comes to mind for a melody I've written. Sure enough, little by little, I learned to write lyrics to existing music. This skill comes in handy when I'm writing a hymn that needs words for a second and/or third verse (strophic writing).

A breakthrough happened about a year later, when I was at a funeral of the mother of a little girl who was a student in the fifth grade girls' Sunday School class that I was teaching. She was the only child of a single mom, and my heart was breaking for this child, who would now be reared by her older-than-average grandparents. As we were leaving the cemetery, we passed by the car where the girl was sitting with her grandmother. I leaned in, gave her a hug, and talked about going for ice cream the next week. As we walked away, I began to weep. A poem I'd studied in high school started running through my head - and with it, the melody that it needed to have! I went straight home, wrote it down and finished the song within a couple of days. That poem was "Spring and Summer: to a Young Child" by Gerard Manley Hopkins, about a young girl dealing with grief. That was the beginning of my learning how to set music to existing words.

Then, with the basic tools in place for writing music, I practiced and honed my skills to write either absolute music, or start with a poem or scripture and add the music, or start with the music and add the words, or do them all simultaneously. Sometime, the inspirational idea takes root quickly and the song almost writes itself; other times, I struggle to get going. I've also used a method I read about in *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* by Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft: set the poem with blank rhythm and then fill in melody notes later.

After a piece is basically written, there's a mountain of work to do to arrange it and notate it correctly. There's so much information on a page of music, and every bit of it is essential, if a person is to be able to realize that music as the composer intends, without verbal instruction.

Composition isn't only fun, it's my passion. I hope to be able to write as long as God gives me life and breath. It means so much to be able to play it or have it played for you. Thank you for your encouragement, WMMC! "

Many thanks to Carlie for her candor, insights, and many contributions to the American Women Composers program over the years.

Our next meeting on February 6th will take place at Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church, 7127 Bee Caves Road. The program Dedicated to Sacred Music will feature performances on the pipe organ. I hope to see you there.

MEMBERS NEWS

Angela Smith reports that her documentary film *Chicks with Sticks* was presented at the Franklin International Independent Film Festival in Nashville, Tennessee in November 2018. Her film won an award for Short Feature from a Documentary.

Music Factoid :

What is Sacred Music?

Sacred music is “that which, being created for the celebration of divine worship, is endowed with a certain holy sincerity of form,” according to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in its Instruction on Music and the Liturgy, Musicam sacram (1967, ¶4). As defined by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium (1963), sacred music surpasses merely religious music when it is joined to the liturgical rite to become “a necessary and integral part of the solemn liturgy,” whose purpose is “the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.”

“As a manifestation of the human spirit,” said John Paul II in 1988, “music performs a function which is noble, unique, and irreplaceable. When it is truly beautiful and inspired, it speaks to us more than all the other arts of goodness, virtue, peace, of matters holy and divine. For good reason it has always been, and it will always be, an essential part of the liturgy.”

Thought for the Day

“You can’t see music as it passes through the air. You can’t grasp it and hold on to it. You can’t smell it. You can’t taste it. But it has a most powerful effect on most people. And that is a wondrous thing to contemplate.” Leon Fleisher (from the Austin Symphony program for Jan. 11-12, 2019)

The Word

by Ella Wheeler Wilcox (American, 1850-1919)

Oh, a word is a gem, or a stone, or a song,
Or aflame, or a two-edged sword;
Or a rose in bloom, or a sweet perfume,
Or a drop of gall is a word.

You may choose your word like a connoisseur,
And polish it up with art,
But the word that sways, and stirs, and stays,
Is the word that comes from the heart.

You may work on your word a thousand weeks,
But it will not glow like one
That all unsought, leaps forth white hot,
When the fountains of feeling run.

ABOUT OUR PERFORMERS

Kathryn Govier, piano

I started music lessons at age 4 and “cut my eye-teeth on Bach.” I was lucky to have a piano teacher who stressed the classics. I earned a Bachelor of Music, piano major (1971), and I’ve used my skills as accompanist and collaborator, as well as soloist. I work with Charles Palmer through the Butler School of Music Outreach program giving retirement home programs. My profession was teacher of the handicapped. I spent 3 years in Marrakesh, Morocco, working with handicapped children as a Peace Corps Volunteer (1987-1990). I love living in Austin with many wonderful cultural events to attend and participate in.

Gregory C. Eaton, organ

Gregory has been organist and Choir Master at All Saints Episcopal Church in Austin since 2014. His previous positions included Director of Music and Choir Master at St. Ann and the Holy Trinity Church in Brooklyn Heights, NY (1993-2014), where he performed 600 recitals and served as guest conductor for various choral ensembles. Prior to St. Ann, he served as assistant organist at Trinity Wall Street and Music Director at the Church of the Epiphany, Manhattan. He was hired as lecturer for church music at General Theological Seminary, where he taught until 2008. Gregory graduated from the University of Redlands, California and is a member of the American Guild of Organists. He co-founded the Chelsea Winds, a recorder ensemble. He loves cooking, photography and hiking.

Elise Ragland, soprano

My great grandfather was an itinerant piano salesman who, upon marrying one of his customers, a piano teacher, established Beasley music company in Texarkana, Texas. I took the required piano lessons and helped out at the store, but my passion was singing. My mother sang with the Shreveport Opera and WMMC. Through adolescence I sang with the adult choir at church. I also sang with the chorus and had leads in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and musicals. I started voice lessons in college and founded The Rice Madrigal Singers and two folk groups with regular coffee house gigs. Since 1977 I have been a mainstay of the choir at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Austin, and finally my voice has grown up so I started voice lessons again in 2014.

Maxine Gomes, piano

Maxine Gomes earned piano performance degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and New York University where she received her Ph.D. She pursued a dual career in New York for many years as a music teacher and solo pianist giving numerous recitals and FM radio broadcasts on Long Island and New York City. After earning a Professional Diploma in Administration, Maxine took a hiatus from music and had a career in school administration on Long Island, New York. Maxine, again, is enjoying performing in the metropolitan Austin area.

Gena Caponi Tabery, organ

Gena is a former Associate Professor and director of American Studies at The University of Texas at San Antonio. She has published in the fields of American Literature, American Music and African American Culture. She has studied piano and organ at Texas Lutheran University and Trinity University, as well as privately with Dr. Frank Speller, Mary Parse, and Gregory Eaton. She is delighted to serve as interim organist at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church. She also serves on the board of Ensemble VIII, an early music vocal ensemble directed by Dr. James Morrow. For more information, see: genatabery.com

Paul Keith, organ

Mr. Keith’s fascination for the organ dates to his youth. He remembers being transported at age three, when he first heard the stirring Toccata from Widor’s *5th Organ Symphony*, the famous organ piece often played at weddings, and has never been able to get away from that feeling. He began piano lessons in second grade in Columbus, Ohio, which was his home at the time. Mr. Keith is in his 34th year as organist at Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church in Austin and serves as the current District Conveners of the Central Texas Region of the American Guild of Organists. He enjoys performing recitals in both area churches and secular venues. A composer of music as well as performer, Mr. Keith’s anthem for choir and organ was released by Augsburg Fortress Publishers of Minneapolis, one of the major church music publishing houses. His piano compositions, recorded at Willy Nelson’s Pedernales studio, are available on CD. Mr. Keith is married and has three children.

Events Calendar



Austin Opera - austinopera.org

Jan. 31, 7:30 PM; Feb. 3, 2:30 PM - The Long Center, 701 W. Riverside Drive
Silent Night.

Austin Opera's season continues with the company premiere of the Pulitzer Prize-winning modern classic *Silent Night*, with music by Kevin Puts and libretto by Mark Campbell.

Austin Civic Orchestra - austincivicorchestra.org

Feb. 2, 7:30 PM – Southwestern University's Alma Thomas Theater, Georgetown
Meisters of Musik.

Program: *Don Giovanni Overture* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; *Clarinet Concerto No. 2, Mvt. II & III* by Carl Maria von Weber; *Flying Dutchman Overture* by Richard Wagner; *Recitative and Aria, "Infelice"* by Felix Mendelssohn and *Symphony No. 1* by Ludwig von Beethoven. Guest performers are soprano Lynn Eustis and ACO clarinetist Caleb Martin, an alum of Southwestern University. Come early for a pre-concert talk led by Dr. Michael Cooper at 6:45 PM.

Salon Concerts – salonconcerts.org

Feb. 2, 4:30 PM; Feb. 4, 7:00 PM – private homes

Program: *Sinfonia concertante in E flat Major* by W. A. Mozart; *Dharma at Big Sur* for six-string electric violin and orchestra by John Adams; *Quintet in C Major, Op. 163, D. 956* by Franz Schubert. Performers: Sean Riley, six-string electric violin; Bruce Williams, viola; Douglas Harvey, cello; Kathryn Mishell, piano; and The Thalea String Quartet.

La Follia Austin Baroque – lafollia.org

Feb. 9, 7:00 PM, Feb. 10, 3:00 PM - Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2111 Alexander Avenue

A World Tour of Baroque Secular and Religious Vocal Works.

Works by Monteverdi, Pergolesi, Vivaldi, Clerambault, Charpentier, Purcell, Bach, Handel and others are performed by four stellar soloists and a 16-piece Baroque chamber ensemble.

Central Texas Medical Orchestra - ctmorchestra.org

Feb. 9, 7:00 PM - Westover Hills Church of Christ, 8332 Mesa Drive

Music from the Heart.

Soloist, Steve Girko, clarinet; Guest artist, The Mrs. Concert benefits Austin Pets Alive.

Austin Chamber Music - austinchambermusic.org

Feb. 9, 6:00 PM, St. Andrew's Upper School, 5901 Southwest Parkway

Feb. 10, 4:00 PM, The Carver Museum, 1165 Angelina Street

The African Diaspora.

Sonata No. 2 in A Major by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges; *Suite for Violin and Piano* by William Grant Still; *Tumbao* by Tania León; *Pan con Timba* by Aldo López Gavilán; *5 Negro melodies for Piano Trio* by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor; *Selections of Bomba y Plena* by Samuel López. Performers: Eleanor Dunbar, violin; Elizabeth Lee, cello; Artina McCain and Jonathan Tsay, piano; Samuel Lopez and Friends, percussion.

Texas Early Music Project - early-music.org

Feb. 16, 7:30 PM - St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 8134 Mesa Drive

Feb. 17, 3:00 PM - First Presbyterian Church, 8001 Mesa Drive

Celtic Fancies: Music from Ireland and Scotland c. 1500-1800.

Scottish and Irish ballads are evocative, heartfelt, and often humorous! Even the English held these works in high esteem, and our own Ben Franklin adored these songs and considered them the height of great art. With New York based guests Peter Walker (singer and a variety of small pipes) and Ryland Angel (singer).

Austin Symphony – austinsymphony.org

Feb. 22, 8:00 PM and Feb. 23, 8:00 PM - The Long Center, 701 W. Riverside Drive

Brahms' Requiem with Conspirare Symphonic Choir.

In admiration of Haydn, Brahms wrote *Variations on the St. Antoni Chorale*, to be performed during the first half before the Conspirare Symphonic Choir joins the Symphony for the *Requiem*. Guest vocalists are Heather Phillips, soprano, and Paul Max Tipton, baritone.

Chorus Austin – chorusaustin.org

Feb. 23, 8:00 PM – St. Martin's Lutheran Church, 606 W. 15th Street

Feb. 24, 4:00 PM – Austin Scottish Rite Theater, 207 W. 18th Street

The Chamber Ensemble joins forces with chamber music group Revel to present works with piano and saxophone, featuring Morten Lauridsen's *Mid-Winter Songs* and Anders Paulsson's stunning arrangement of *Deep River* for chorus and saxophone.

<http://music.utexas.edu/> - check all events online

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