



ROSSINI NOTES

VOL. 150 NO. 3 Newsletter of the Portland Rossini Club Spring 2021
Sesquicentennial Edition

From Our President

What a winter it was! Goodbye and good riddance. Although the virus and its variants continue to hit hard and we are not out of the woods yet, many of us have had our vaccines and I'd say things are moving in the right direction. Spring flowers have popped up. Daffodils and forsythia are blooming. Tulips will be next, and all things considered, this makes for a happy, hopeful spring and musical summer!

Your Board has been working very hard over the winter to bring you concerts on Zoom. Although there's no replacement for live music, it was quite pleasant for those of us who partook, to sit in the comfort of our own living rooms listening to and watching our talented Club members and guests perform. Kudos and gratitude to all those who worked incredibly hard to "keep the music playing."

We've also been working hard on planning for the future and in particular, for the celebration of our 150th anniversary. Here's what we have in store: Our last Zoom concert of this season will be on May 16th. June, as usual will be a month off. There will be two garden concerts again this summer. The first in July will be at the Portland Community Squash Center. The second will be in August at the home of John Crowley and Jen Packard who live just behind me in Falmouth. After the music, we'll walk over to my garden for champagne and 150th birthday cake to begin the celebration for this fabulous club.

(continues on column 3)

**To All Active, Privileged,
Honorary, and
Associate Members**

CALL TO OUR VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

- **Date: Sunday, May 16,
following the concert**
- **Place: your home
(advance registration
required - see May flyer -
coming soon)**

BUSINESS AGENDA

**Officer and Committee
Reports**

**Discuss 150th
Anniversary
Celebration**

**Discuss Attracting New
Members**

(continued from column 1)

September may likely find us back at St. Luke's where we can continue to celebrate part two of our 'gala' event. Need I say how fantastic it will be to be back there? Part three of our 150th gala will be a Zoom concert in France with a performance by the world-renowned Karine DesHayes. Karine is a French mezzo soprano who has performed all over the world including at the Met in NYC. She has spent quite a lot of time singing and honing her craft at the Royaumont Abbey north of Paris. We shall join Karine there where she will sing for us music by Gioachino Rossini who just happens to be her specialty!! We will also get a tour of the abbey and gardens given to us by my friend, the director, Monsieur Francis Marechal.

The questionnaire we recently engaged in has opened my eyes to a few things. Our Club, if it wants to survive another 150 years, needs to bring in new members. Just as importantly, we could really benefit from more active engagement by our current members. The world has changed and we must adapt to keep this Club vital into the future.

I hope we can move into 2022 and beyond with renewed energy and commitment to this wonderful club.

Happy Spring and Happy Birthday Rossini!

Sydney Patten
978-771-0552
sydpatten@gmail.com

This just in!

We need in-person performers for next season - September through May.

Please contact
Susanna Adams at
saviolabow@maine.rr.com.

From Our Program Chair

This year's concerts (except for the summer months) have occurred on Zoom. Because of our clever member Dale Ashby, we have had access to his recordings of past performances by our members. In addition the April 11th concert included a quartet recently recorded at the home of Eleanor Lehmann. Susanna Adams and Dermot Bostock have ably assisted the production of these Zoom concerts.

Many thanks to all of these members who have helped Rossini Club survive in this most difficult of times!!

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the guidance of our President, Sydney Patten, who has been at the helm of the Club. Her creativity this year has been priceless!!

Cecile DeRoche-Cain, Program Chair

Sesquicentennial Thoughts

Recently I asked Members to share memories for this edition, and I was glad to receive enough responses to more than fill a page. I thought I'd include these responses from our recent Past President as well as our President here. On page three you will find program memories, and on page four, some further thoughts from Past President, Sally Merrill.

Although I am a relative newcomer to the Rossini Club (2005), my fondest memories were getting accepted into the Club, the happy times performing in ensemble and as soloist, having the honor of holding the office of President for a short time and lastly watching audience appreciation of the various performances.

Thank you Rossini Club for adding such joy to my life.
(Past President) Eleanor Lehmann

I'm afraid I haven't been part of Rossini long enough to have any long-term memories. There is a fairly recent performance which stands out for me and that would be the concert in which Heday Inoue performed. Sadly, he has moved away, but I will not soon forget his incredible voice and vibrant stage presence.

(President) Sydney Patten

OUR OFFICERS and COMMITTEE CHAIRS 2020-2021

President:	Sydney Patten
First Vice-President:	Cecile DeRoche-Cain
Second Vice-President:	Barbara Graustein
Recording Secretary:	Susanna Adams
Treasurer:	Sheila McGarr
Assistant Treasurer:	Mathew Nichols
Piano Chair:	Scott Eaton
Candidate Chair:	Barbara Graustein
Communications Committee Chair:	Sheila McGarr
Corresponding Secretary:	Cynthia Henriques

Report of PRC Secretary and Zoom Host

My duties as Secretary continue the COVID routine. Our Zoom concerts will end (with a few exceptions) at the May 16th concert. Until then, I will notify members (and also Marston Kotzschmar (MK) members) of the monthly Zoom concerts and direct them toward registering. Sheila McGarr will take registrations and send materials and the Zoom link to registrants the day before the final concert.

Dermot Bostock is putting together the last Zoom concert of the season, May 16th, which will feature soprano Torrey Gimpel and pianist Diane Walsh. It will be followed by the Annual Membership Meeting (see more in this issue). Although we expect to be back at St. Luke's in person this September, we are mounting a Zoom concert in the fall from Royaumont in France, featuring a soprano who specializes in the works of Gioachino Rossini.

Thanks to the work of Dale Ashby, PRC videographer, the Portland Media Center cablecasted our Portland Rossini virtual concert dated 01-24-2021 on Spectrum Cable Channel 5 on various dates and times in early April. This is our first time on local television and the video plays well for us. Other Portland Rossini Zoom concerts from February, March and April will be hand delivered in mid-April to the Portland Media Center, Spectrum Cable Channel 5 for future program scheduling. Members will be informed.

Susanna Adams, Secretary

LOOKING BACK

Thanks to those of you who, with a few days' notice, shared your memories with me. I will incorporate your memories as I share some of mine.

Member Bonnie Doe Scarpelli invited me to sing duets with her, in (I think) 1979. I auditioned and was accepted as a member in 1980. Westbrook College was the first venue where I sang for Rossini Club. I can't remember the name of the hall, but it was a large, old, somewhat ramshackle wooden building, with decent acoustics, toward the back of the Westbrook College campus. After a while we moved to a recently renovated former church on the Westbrook College campus. We need to remember that with each move came the need to make a space for and to move our two Steinway grand pianos!!

Cecile DeRoche-Cain tells us "A fond memory I have is the two pianists who were assisted on a third piano by Richard Roberts. This performance took place when the Club performed in the remodeled chapel at Westbrook College. Duo pianists Priscilla Morneau and Elinor Carter were practicing their selection on stage when Richard Roberts heard them and offered to accompany them with the orchestral part. It was a thrilling performance, a once in a lifetime experience at Rossini Club!!" Ed: *I'm pretty sure Richard Roberts was not a member at that time, but he was on the faculty of Westbrook College, so he played an important part in the life of our Club even before becoming a member.*

Richard Roberts plays an important part in many of the memories you shared with me, so I'll call the next five paragraphs our joint "Ode to Richard Roberts". With Richard Roberts as Program Chair, began an era of amazing imagination and creativity for Rossini Club. He was always thinking of interesting new themes and events. In September 2011, we celebrated Franz Liszt's Bicentennial; we celebrated Debussy's Sesquicentennial in September, 2012, Verdi and Wagner's Centennial September 2013; and in February, 2014, we celebrated Benjamin Britten's Centennial. Each concert was packed with fine performances, presented by our own members, as well as with a few guests.

Cynn timeriques says "Richard Roberts organized two concerts that were special for sure. One when all Chopin's Preludes were played on October, 2009, and Francis Madeira at the age of 90 played Chopin's *Raindrop Prelude in D Major Op. 28 #15* from memory! Impressive! The other memorable concert was March 10, 2013, when each performer played a movement from a concerto. I remember clarinetist Nina Oatley playing Stamitz *Concerto # 3 in B flat Major* in particular. I played, with guest Martin Perry, the *Andante* from Mozart's *Piano Concerto #21*. Quite an experience! Richard had some wonderful ideas about themes for concerts."

Richard presented several special concerts to raise money for our Piano Fund. I seem to remember that he performed Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* twice, much to my delight. I also especially enjoyed Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*.

Richard directed at least a couple of narrated productions as well: In May, 2013, I was privileged to narrate Eric Satie's *Sports and Diversions*, and we performed Camille Saint Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* in May, 2014 (it was especially memorable for me because it was a huge challenge to clearly enunciate Ogden Nash's humorous poetry in the lively cathedral acoustics). All were performed by our own members as well as a few guests.

Clarinetist Steve Schiffman says "I had the privilege of playing one of the Brahms clarinet sonatas with Richard Roberts shortly before he passed away (suddenly on April 3, 2016). Rehearsing with him was the best part!"

Lurette Saul soon became Program Chair. As well as continuing our traditional varied programs, she soon ably put together several amazing opera themed programs, using our talented vocalist members and guests.

Cecile DeRoche-Cain became Program Chair in September 2018, ably carrying on our varied program tradition. Our 149th season ended abruptly March 8, 2020, due to COVID, but for me, it was one of our most memorable ones, with pianist Diane Walsh performing with her friend, cellist Marcy Rosen, Chopin's *Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 65*, as well as Portland Conservatory of Music's wonderful girl's choir, the Iris Ensemble, performing a variety of choral selections.

Steve Schiffman adds "Just this past week, with the release on YouTube of a 2019 trio performance by Mark Braun, Seth Blank and me, I was transported back to our pre-pandemic times, when we took live performances for granted. Looking forward to those days again soon."

I second that!

Past President Beth Harmon

Some Reflections About Rossini Club

From Past President, Sally Merrill

In retrospect, what accounts, at least in part, for the enduring legacy of the Portland Rossini Club? For more than fifteen decades, it met many challenges, but these challenges, after a fashion, have been resolved. Time and time again, the Club has proved to be resilient. Onward it has continued through several economic depressions, two World Wars, several terrorist attacks, and now a pandemic. Despite national and global turmoil, expressions of beauty, of which music is one, continues to endure. In the Portland Rossini Club, such expressions of music are cherished and nurtured.

In spite of apparent continuity, change is inevitable. Nothing stays the same. So it is with Rossini Club. Even within the past fifty years, significant change has occurred and the Club has evolved.

New members have joined not only with musical talent but also with technological savvy. The Club has acquired a logo, a website, as well as the capacity to record and produce CDs of the programs. Most recently, due to the pandemic, meetings and concerts have been held via Zoom. Clearly, the Club has been flexible and adapted to our changing era.

Regarding performance, women no longer are expected to appear in floor length dresses. Memorization is no longer mandatory. Bylaws have been changed so men no longer are "guests" but are eligible for full membership. Again, the Club reflects its ability to change and be flexible, thereby contributing to its endurance.

Moreover, during the past fifty years, the venue for performance has changed at least six times: St. Joseph's, Westbrook College, USM-Gorham, Trinity Episcopal, Woodfords Congregational Church, and St. Luke's. Flexibility and perseverance made these changes possible.

Amid all these changes, leadership, though overwhelmed occasionally, has evolved, primarily because members with vision have stepped forward to serve as needed. For those members, we are much indebted for our survival.

Some changes are necessary, but inevitably a few have been controversial. On balance, personal preferences have yielded to common consensus.

Flexibility is important, but even more so are relationships, the very lifeblood of the Club. Members continue to support one another and form lifelong friendships. However, these relationships would not happen without a shared commitment to music, which mysteriously conveys a certain magic, lasting far beyond the sound of the last note. Praise Be!!