



ROSSINI NOTES

VOL. 150 NO. 2

Newsletter of the Portland Rossini Club

Winter 2021

From Our President

It is trite but true that 'Every cloud has a silver lining.' This saying certainly applies to the last 13 months. Did any of us ever imagine that we would live through a global pandemic and a coup attempt? At the same time no less! Probably not. Through the very hard work of all its Board members and through the steadfast loyalty of many of our members, we have managed to keep the music playing. The virus has forced us to be creative in our thinking and we have experienced music at locales overseas and beautiful gardens in the past few months. These are things that the Portland Rossini Club has never done before. Modern technology and Zoom in particular have been lifesavers, or rather club savers!

Looking ahead, there seems to be hope on the horizon. Even though we are mired in a political situation the likes of which we have never seen in our life times, there seems to be hope with a new more inclusive administration having been sworn in. And the vaccination is now here and beginning to be distributed. My best guess is that we may be able to congregate again at St. Luke's sometime in the fall or next winter.

In the meantime we will continue our garden concerts during the nice weather and at least one concert per season overseas.

(continues on column 3)

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

CALL TO OUR VIRTUAL WINTER BUSINESS MEETING

Date: Sunday, February 21
Place: your home, following
our February 21 program
(advance registration required
- see February Flyer)

BUSINESS AGENDA

**Officer and Committee
Reports**

**Discuss 150th Anniversary
Celebration**

**Discuss Attracting New
Members**

**Address Technical
Challenges**

(continued from column 1)

I ask all of our members for your continued support during these difficult times. Simply attending our Zoom concerts is a wonderful way of supporting this historic club. In addition, if you would like to open your garden to one of our outdoor concerts, that would be greatly appreciated. Finally, inviting friends and neighbors to join our meetings helps keep things going in our club during this, our 150th anniversary year. Speaking of which, it has been decided that our grand gala will be put off until we are free again to reconvene. And what a gala it will be! There will be music, there will be food, there will be wine, and who knows, there may even be dancing!

A final shout out to all of my Board members who really have done double and triple duty this year. Their behind-the-scenes work has been extraordinary and difficult.

My best to you all in this new and exciting year. Stay safe, look at the glass as half full, and by all means, keep the music playing!

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

From Our Program Chair

The year 2020 is certainly one for the history books!! Having our concerts on Zoom is something our ancestors would marvel at. And who would have imagined garden concerts throughout the summer!

Our current President Sydney Patten has led us through this crisis year with enthusiasm and creativity. Susanna has become a technological genius. Dale Ashby has been indispensable with his catalogue of recordings from which to draw our concerts. I also know that Dermot Bostock has contributed his expertise to support Susanna's efforts.

Right now we have programming plans through May and are looking forward to more summer garden concerts. If any of you have ideas about what Rossini could present, please contact us.

May we all stay healthy!!

Cecile DeRoche-Cain,
Program Chair
(207) 332-6117
musikmom810@gmail.com

Sharing Memories

As a forty year member, I have countless memories of special Rossini Club musical programs. On this 150th anniversary, I'm hoping that you will share some of your memories as well, in future *Rossini Notes*. Please send them to me at bethharmon2@gmail.com.

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 have been quite routine this COVID year. I notify members (and also Marston Kotzschmar (MK) members) of the monthly Zoom concerts and answer their questions about registration for concerts. To explain how registration works: I send the flyer which displays the content of the concert. A smaller square on the flyer contains a hyperlink to the registration page on our website, rossiniclub.org. When you register, your information is emailed to Sheila McGarr, our Secretary. As Zoom host (see below) I send a Zoom invitation to Sheila, who forwards it, plus a program, program notes, song lyrics, etc., to you **THE DAY BEFORE THE SUNDAY MEETING**. Zoom concerts are free for members and Marston Kotzschmar members.

My duties as Zoom host have evolved. First, I need to acknowledge expert technical help from Dale Ashby and Dermot Bostock. Dale has recorded (video) most St. Luke's concerts since September of 2017. We have relied heavily on his recordings. Dermot has helped to combine disparate historic performances (from different dates) into a seamless whole that I can share on Zoom. He also has combined two performers together (his son Michael and the flutist Alex Lehmann in September) and is looking into doing more of that.

We had a rocky start with the first Zoom concert. First, I played selections from MK Rossini's YouTube collections on Zoom. The audio result was not good, and we resolved to play selections from my downloads only (without the YouTube intermediary). The next month, I had experimented with editing some of the selections, and in so doing had to change the formats to jibe with the editing software I could use (big learning curve here). Changing the file formats also resulted in less than stellar audio. Then the November concert from France (edited by Dermot) gave us a breather. We resolved to let Dale do all the editing of the archival material for the Richard Roberts Memorial Concert on January 24, which worked out exceptionally well. The next Zoom concert on February 21, featuring two vocalists and a chamber group, is being edited by Dale and Dermot. Our Rossini Zoom Concert dated 01-24-2021 will be broadcast on **Cable Channel 5, Portland Media Center** soon. Members and MK members will be notified.

We are still soliciting newly recorded material from members for the March and April concerts. Contact me at saviolabow@maine.rr.com if you are interested. The May program is slated to feature a violinist from "abroad," and we are still working out the details.

This has been a very interesting year. Even when we can be back in person (we hope in the fall) we may continue to put videos on our YouTube channel for those who have difficulty making it to winter in-person performances.

Susanna Adams, Secretary

Early Memories of Rossini Club **from Past President, Sally Merrill**

I first learned about Portland Rossini Club from my mother. She joined in 1925 after graduating from New England Conservatory of Music. During those early days, she performed and attended regularly as well as teaching piano privately in her studio located over Dudley/Weed drugstore at Woodfords Corner. Continuing into the 1930s, an era of economic depression and impending global war, she performed regularly and developed with Club members several lifelong friendships, including Katherine Graffam, Marie English, and Florence Ericson. By the 1940s, my brother and I arrived, and she chose to devote more time to family life, although she stayed connected and never lost her commitment to the Club.

One of my early memories is one in which she quickly washed the breakfast dishes, donned her hat and checked her lipstick before dashing up the street to catch an early bus so she would arrive at Frye Hall in time to get a "good seat" because that day Barbara Hardy (later Burbank) was scheduled to sing. "What a glorious voice!" my mother exclaimed, still reveling in its bell-like beauty.

In those days, programs began at ten o'clock in the morning and were held at Frye Hall where the "preferred seats," in my mother's view, were located in the first row of the balcony.

On several occasions, after my mother returned from a Rossini Club program, she would show me her copy of the program. Having little understanding of what was printed, I simply asked, "How was it?"

While pointing her finger to various pieces, my mother replied, "This one was performed with excellent technique and fluency." "This one was felt from her heart." "This one was simply beautiful."

To mother, these observations were facts, not judgments. She was there not to judge, but to encourage. After all, this was a Club composed of dedicated musicians, all of whom were fallible human beings. They performed at Frye Hall, not Carnegie Hall. Nevertheless, standards were high. The task was to support one another.

Mother not only performed solo piano and occasionally piano duets with Florence Ericson, but also she often accompanied vocalists who usually arrived at our home in the evening to rehearse. I remember Nerissa Purrington, Katherine O'Connor, and Georgia Thomas. At the time, dressed in my pajamas, I was introduced and then retreated upstairs to bed from where I listened to this marvelous cascade of music. Of course I had no libretto and my language, at the time was limited to English, so I simply lay there and tried to imagine what the music was about.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Evelyn Carroll in her most charming and authoritative manner convinced my mother to serve as Program Chairman. "Horrors!" was my mother's initial reaction. The telephone conversation was long and animated. However, once mother was convinced, she took this task very seriously. Our small telephone table became littered with lists of possible substitutes, in case one of the scheduled performers had to cancel. A flurry of telephone calls ensued and eventually yielded a substitute. I was told vocalists are particularly prone to colds, which of course would make performing impossible.

In our Spring 2021 issue of Rossini Notes, we will share Sally's reflections about Rossini Club's history, how it has changed, and the Club's relevance. If you, too, have thoughts to share, please send them, before April 10, to Beth at Bethharmon2@gmail.com

