



Friends of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Annual Report, 2020-21

The 2020-21 season was anything but typical for the Friends of the SPCO: The continuing COVID pandemic caused changes to our way of operating, just as it did to the functioning of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra itself. As SPCO President and CEO Jon Limbacher stated at the Friends' November 2020 Board meeting – which, like all our activities this year, took place via Zoom – the Orchestra is facing these challenges with “optimism rooted in realism.” The same can be said for the Friends, who have pulled together enthusiastically this past year to continue supporting the SPCO.

Youth Chamber Music Competition

As small group meetings during the fall of 2020 focused on clarifying the mission and goals of the Friends, the Youth Chamber Music Competition was a topic of primary interest, even though it could not be held this year due to the pandemic. Outside organizations were invited to submit proposals for managing the Competition, and after considerable exploration and discussion, the Saint Paul Conservatory of Music (SPCM) was chosen as an organization capable of applying new ideas that will take our Competition successfully into the future.

In April 2021 we finalized an agreement that the Friends and the SPCM would run future competitions jointly, with a new seven-person board of advisors consisting of artists appointed by both bodies, and a new Competition director, Dr. Rena Kraut. The Friends' role will be primarily to provide financial and fundraising support and, as always, to volunteer especially on the day of the Competition.

Archives

In another new effort, the Friends decided to place their historical records in the Performing Arts Archives of the University of Minnesota, which are stored at the Elmer L. Andersen Library. This marks the beginning of fully professional, systematic management of our archives by an ideal organization, which has the advantage of locating our materials alongside the SPCO's own archives. Board members and Friends members at large were asked to gather relevant materials, and in May 2021 we made our first archival deposit of past years' financial documents, photos and annual reports.

Friends' Events

The Friends offered their first event of the season in February 2021, when Marcus Hanson, who is both a singer and a wine merchant, led an online wine tasting, featuring various wines from Australia. Some 40 participants purchased the wines separately and enjoyed the event

tremendously from their homes. Both musically and socially, the experience was done very creatively, with Mr. Hanson selecting and singing opera arias as he introduced and commented on different wines.

While we couldn't host a Conversation with Books this season, St. Catherine University invited our membership to join a virtual Conversation with Books that they were presenting. The May 2021 event was very well received, and we greatly appreciate that St. Kate's offered this opportunity free of charge.

Financial Summary

Although the Larsen Foundation did not provide its usual grant of \$6,000 to the Friends during the previous year, 2019-20, it gave two such grants in Fiscal '21. Membership income this past year was \$12,405, slightly higher than in 2019-20. This strong member support, combined with the two Larsen Foundation gifts, enabled the Friends to maintain their goal of making an annual gift of \$20,000 directly to the SPCO. Since we were only able to host one event this season, event income was a modest \$1,550.

Though the Competition was on hiatus this year, a number of gifts were still made in this category, so that when a payment of \$5,000 was sent to the Saint Paul Conservatory to support development of the new competition program, a total of \$13,360 was still on hand as Competition-restricted funds.

Annual Meeting

At the Friends' annual meeting for 2020-21, held via Zoom on June 1, 2021, Carolynn Johnson and Andrea McCue were elected co-presidents for the 2021-22 season. The Ultimate Friend Award was given to former board chair and competition chair Donna Ahrens, and Karen Larsen was elected Director Emerita. Friend Par Excellence Awards were given both to Clea Galhano for her work in brokering our agreement with the Saint Paul Conservatory of Music and to the Musicians and Staff of the SPCO for their excellent service during a difficult pandemic year.

Looking Forward

The pandemic prevented us from holding our popular and much-appreciated lecture series by Dr. Daniel Freeman. Accordingly, Committee members explored the option of presenting the lectures virtually, and a plan was adopted to offer them via Zoom in the following season, 2021-22.

Similarly, we were unable to participate as usual in the SPCO's educational programs, CONNECT and Start the Music, but we anticipate returning to those activities as soon as possible. We know our members care deeply about these programs, which meet the needs of families and children who may otherwise have little or no access to classical music.

We are grateful to every member of the Friends of the SPCO and to all others who support our programs in any way. Above all, we are thankful to the musicians and staff of our Orchestra for their immense contribution to the life of our community and the world of classical music.

Respectfully submitted,

Inez Bergquist
2020-2021 President, Friends of the SPCO