
WHOLE NOTES

Newsletter of Mount Vernon Music Association

January 2012

Outreach to Young Audiences

Thanks to MVISD Superintendant John Kaufman, and coordinating help by volunteers Kitty Ramsay, Ken Greer and Sarah Smith, MVM has made multiple appearances in Mt. Vernon schools this season. MVHS band directors Tanya Eckstein and Tracy Farr hosted Duo Renard for a casual visit with the band, as the fall semester got under way. Violist April Kondrat performed her imaginative and entertaining one-woman viola show for Head Start, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd graders the following week, and on a gorgeous fall day in October middle school students took in a special performance by Dream



Collectors, a group of professional actors and musicians from the Fine Arts Chamber Players of Dallas. And in a reprise of last season's *Musical Storytelling*, double bassist Paul Unger joined Steve Harlos, piano, Mark Miller, violin and narrator Debbie Ragsdale in lively presentations for 3rd and 4th graders in Mt. Vernon and Sulphur Springs, where enthusiasm was especially high for theme music from *The Simpsons*. Thanks to all the principals for letting us share the magic of live music with young listeners. Teachers praised the age-appropriate selections and the interaction of our performers with the students, one common observation being that students "... were totally engrossed in the presentation."

Texas Commission on the Arts Assists MVM

Last season (2010-2011) MVM boosted its outreach program to nursing homes and senior centers with the help of a matching grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts. In recommending the award, the TCA's evaluating panel last year gave MVM high marks, scoring our application with 913 points out of a possible 1000. This year our repeat application resulted in another match grant. Though the amount is less than last year (TCA's budget was slashed roughly in half), the panel's comments were unambiguously positive, and they honored MVM with a near-perfect score of 993. One panelist said "There are not many organized music groups in this region, and Mount Vernon Music Association has a great impact on the community I highly recommend this program for support." The senior outreach program needs this funding to continue reaching people on a monthly basis. Your tax-deductible donations enable us to match the TCA's grant. Please help in any way you can. Thank you!

City of Mt. Vernon Doing Its Part for Music

MVM was the recipient of \$2000 from the City of Mt. Vernon's hotel tax revenue in October. The funds were applied to MVM's marketing and operational expenses, helping defray the cost of our season brochure and the insurance on MVM Hall. We appreciate the support from the city, which lets MVM share the gift of music with the citizens of Mt. Vernon and the region.



Tom Wilkinson, Underwriter

One MVM supporter who has gone out of his way earning our undying gratitude is Tom Wilkinson. Starting with his gift of the 1898 Steinway piano in honor of his aunt Agnes, and continuing each season with a recital in her memory, Tom has proven his eagerness to back up his fondness for MVM's work with financial help. This season he underwrites no fewer than three events: the *Masters of the Baroque* concert in October, a stunning performance by soprano Dana Pundt before Christmas, and the March 17 Agnes Burns concert on the Dan Garland pipe organ in First United Methodist Church of Mt. Vernon.

We asked Tom about his generous commitment to music in MVM. He explained, "My interest in Baroque, organ and vocal music all goes back to my aunts, Agnes and Gladys, who first introduced me to Bach and Handel, and to opera, as well as great sacred choral music. Both aunts played the organ, too, primarily in church settings, and the power and range of the pipe organ has always impressed me. It's not coincidental, I think, that organ is also an instrument of the Baroque period." Tom's generosity and commitment to the importance of music inspires us as we work to fulfill MVM's mission.

Let There Be Light

The new house lighting in MVM Hall was a long time coming, but all the more welcome when it was finally in place. Installed just in time for the Gala in August, the lights replaced old fixtures that were, in one volunteer's words, "a joy to throw away!" Recurring troubles with the stage lighting have presented a more urgent problem. Lack of adequate protection in the building against lightning strikes, and LED pods which proved unreliable, combined to cause multiple failures in the past two seasons. We're grateful to Lillie Bush-Reves and Ken Greer for saving the day several times by going and opening the hall for technician Craig Stuck, who has made several trips to Mt. Vernon from Mesquite to repair and replace parts of the system as needed. Craig says we should be in much stronger shape when he is finished.

Instrument of History

We tend to think of harpsichords as old instruments, creating an old kind of sound, used in music of long ago. After all, the harpsichord dates back to Baroque and even Renaissance times. But present-day harpsichord players more often than not use modern replicas of these ancient instruments. The Baroque concert in October was an extra special occasion for harpsichordist Maria Guenette, since it was her first performance on her brand new harpsichord, the creation of San Antonio builder Gerald Self. While all new instruments take some playing time to reach their full potential, we're confident this one is destined for greatness, as it already sounded terrific.



Getting By With Help From Our Friends

It started in September, with preparations for the *Woodwinds – Strings Attached* concert. One of the pieces on the program was a quartet by Franz Schubert. While rehearsing, Ute, Mark, Karen and Beth got to wondering if there was more that they could do to give the upcoming performance a little “something extra” for the audience. Someone suggested playing standing up, rather than sitting, so they tried it and liked the resulting dance-like freedom. There was only one problem. Cellist Karen, having to sit no matter what, needed a platform so she would be at the same height as her colleagues. What to do? A brief phone call to MVM member and expert craftsman Ron Milton provided the answer, as Ron took only a couple of days to come up with a perfectly proportioned and stained (to match the stage floor) podium for Karen to play on. There could be no better example of the strength of MVM in its wonderful members and volunteers. The quartet liked it so much that they transported the podium to repeat performances in Dallas and Commerce. Karen loved it, declaring it “Beautiful!” She did have to take a little teasing from the other players, though, who wanted to know “What’s it like up there?”

Local Business Offers New Pledge of Support

A division of Guaranty Bond Bank in Mt. Pleasant has pledged a generous donation to assist MVM as we work to make the gift of music accessible in people’s lives. According to Mark Miller, confirmation of the pledge came from Mick Trusty, Senior Vice President and Trust Officer at Guaranty Trust and Wealth Management. Mr. Trusty has been observing goings-on in the Mt. Vernon area for some time, and was personally introduced to MVM last fall by fellow Sulphur Springs Rotarian and former MVM board member Trice Lawrence.

Brave Combo Delivers in 3rd Annual Gala

This season’s Gala fundraiser was MVM’s most successful to date, with sponsorships, ticket sales, and donations from the silent auction bringing in over \$13,000 to help MVM meet our budget targets for the 2011-12 season. Denton-based Brave Combo rocked the house with their hilarious mix of polka, salsa, and their own flavor of world music, instigating large-scale audience participation in both a conga line *and* the chicken dance. And who but Brave Combo could create a polka out of Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*?

Skilled Help For MVM Office

MVM’s office productivity recently got an upgrade with the hiring of a part-time office assistant. Pei-Ju Wu is a violinist, with administrative experience working for the Houston Chamber Choir as well as her own chamber ensembles. Her experience and strong computer skills, combined with a



thorough understanding of MVM’s mission, have brought a big improvement in the office’s capacity to get tasks accomplished. If you get a letter from MVM, there’s a good chance it was processed by her. She also just happens to be a wonderful musician, and we’re looking forward to performing with her in April.

MVM Board of Trustees

Mark Miller
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Mount Vernon Music is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

Your tax-deductible donations to Mount Vernon Music will help ensure the future of great music in the heart of Northeast Texas

Give To The MVM Scholarship Fund

This is the time of year we begin ramping up the publicity for our Young Artists Showcase event in May, and for the MVM Scholarship Competition. All funds received for the MVM scholarship are set aside to help graduating high school seniors from rural East Texas who go on to college to major in music. Your generosity has made it possible for MVM to give four awards of \$1000 so far. As the cost of higher education is soaring, we would love to be able to offer aspiring artists from this area even more. Please consider giving to this very worthy cause. Thank you.

Savings Bonds for Lucky Listeners

Thanks to the generosity of First National Bank of Mt. Vernon, concertgoers arriving at this season's events in MVM Hall are given a registration form for a drawing along with their concert program, for a chance to win a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond. While regulars know MVM concerts are lively social events, the monthly drawing definitely adds to the fun, and helps us develop our list of contacts. Thanks, FNB!

Visit Us Online

Don't forget to visit <http://www.mountvernonmusic.org> from time to time to see what's new with MVM. Pictures, news, and videos on the site change regularly, so it's a great way to catch up on what's happened and what is about to happen. Right now, you can follow a link to a story about MVM in the current issue of *Chamber Music*, the magazine of Chamber Music America. Go to <http://www.chamber-music.org/pdf/291-amensemble.pdf>, and scroll down to the second article. And if you do social media, please become an MVM fan on Facebook, too. Happy browsing!



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