



It hardly seems possible that it has been more than three decades since my first audition for the Portland Youth Philharmonic. At the time, the orchestra was considered a professional orchestra of students, but the students were not paid to participate. The members ranged in age from approximately 10 to 22, with skill levels ranging from ‘very good’ to ‘outstanding.’ Was I good enough to get in? And even if I was, did I have the level of discipline that was undoubtedly required? These were the 64-million-dollar questions rolling around in my 13-year-old mind.

## Alumni Spotlight

By Andrew Ramage  
(PYP 1989-1993)

I’d played the violin for four years, starting in the 4th grade but my first lessons with a private teacher – Ms. Catherine Petersen, alumna of the orchestra from the 1920s and ‘30s (!) - were not until two years later. Why did I want to participate? I hadn’t planned on a musical career, but as an intellectually curious individual, I was hoping I could learn something more, and become a better musician. Although the season had already started, the parent of a PYP musician encouraged me to apply for a late audition with music director Jacob Avshalomov, known to everyone as Mr. A. I practiced many hours for a week, then played for Mr. A and I got in. The next Saturday morning, at my first rehearsal, he said, “When in doubt, look up! When not in doubt, all the more reason! Look up!” Meaning, look up at the baton. Once in awhile he’d repeat this, just to make sure we hadn’t forgotten.

Over the next four seasons, we played a lot of music. I don’t recall any one program that was easy and a few that still come to mind were enormously challenging. For our April 1991 Spring Concert we had exactly 7 weeks to get ready. The concert included not one but two symphonies – including the Trombone Symphony by Ernest Bloch (1954), with alumnus Peter Ellefson as guest soloist. This rather raucous affair of a concerto – although titled a symphony – definitely raised a few eyebrows. The centerpiece of the evening was Ralph Vaughan Williams’ morbid Sixth Symphony (1948), which features the violin sections prominently. There was nary an uncomplicated measure, with torrents of difficult runs, meter changes and awkward harmonies, with only the final movement, subtitled ‘Epilogue’, offering a bit of solace.



*Andrew Ramage*

In his comments to the audience, Mr. A advised, “This, you might almost say, is an unlovely piece. You have to move toward it, and in the end, it will move you.” It was a lesson for all of us – including the audience, who had been instructed by our great leader to sit at attention and just listen. I must say, the First Violin section, led by co-concertmasters Lisa Chong and Jennifer Choi, outdid themselves that night. The next week at rehearsal, he said, “The Vaughan Williams was all it should’ve been.” Also on that program were some dances from the charming but obscure ballet “Namouna” by Edouard Lalo (1823-1892). Several years ago, I transcribed two movements from it as a recital number for violin and piano. The final number was Enesco’s First Roumanian Rhapsody. I think by then we were all tired. The review in the paper the following week remarked, “it got off to an unsettled start from which it never quite recovered,” but mentioned that Kenji Bunch, principal violist, played his solo beautifully.

Mr. A had high standards for the orchestra and always pushed us to our uppermost limits. When it was “not good enough!”, everyone in the room knew that they had to shape up. He never expected the impossible out of us, but knowing him, I’m sure he tacitly thought, “well, if we can do about ninety percent of it, we will have succeeded.” Inevitably, we did even better than that. That was what made the PYP as great as it was for so many years – it had an established working methodology that – let’s face it – worked. The most significant thing I took away from my time in the PYP was not only gaining analytical skills, but upholding the obligation as a member of the ensemble, to simply play the music as well as possible – a kind of workplace team spirit. Learning how to problem-solve with all the challenging music programmed by Mr. A took

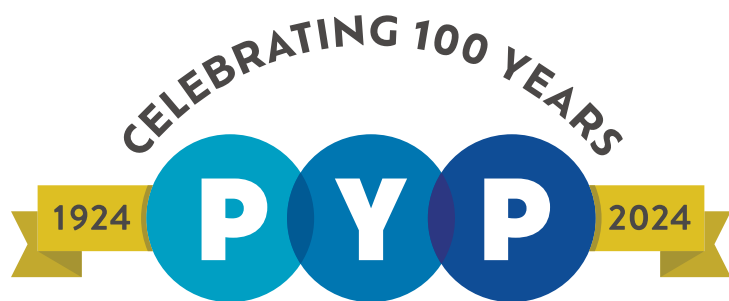
on a new meaning as time passed. Figuring out how to execute difficult passagework, counting odd time signatures, and probably a dozen other things that go into playing an orchestral part well, helped me in so many ways – including in non-musical parts of my life. Mind you, there was no YouTube or Google in those days to aid us! We had to figure most of it out on our own. Our weekly sectional rehearsals were useful but ultimately, it was up to us to prepare our work, like professional players. Nowadays, as an accountant in a publicly-traded organization with a lot of deadlines, I use these tools every day as I deal with volumes of numbers and transactions. Later, when I learned the advanced violin repertoire, including the violin concertos of Walton, Bartok, Berg, Rozsa, and others, all written in the 1930s and later, I found that I had enough musical understanding from my PYP days that I could approach them with a more educated perspective as far as interpreting them, despite how technically demanding these modern idioms are.

To this day, I am indebted to Mr. A for giving us so much contemporary music to play. Not all of it was appealing, but being a musician sometimes means playing things we dislike – although our audiences can’t ever get that impression. Why is this ‘lesser’ classical music performed? There are many reasons. The main one is that it simply can’t be all chocolate souffle classical and romantic pieces. There has to be variety, and some of it has to be the music of living composers. Then there are the forgotten treasures – the great but seldom-heard works that may have been popular in days gone by, or which just never found their audience. It’s the responsibility of any good music director to plan programs that not only entertain the audience but that keep the orchestra motivated and inspired. Mr. A said once or twice over the years, “the reason some pieces are world famous is because they’re just...so...good.” It sounds very simplistic but there’s no doubt about it. I am also indebted to the PYP orchestra of the early 90s. I think virtually everyone in the ensemble was there for the purpose of executing the music to the best of our abilities. Thank you for the memories. Not a month goes by when I don’t think about those rather innocent early years.

**Andrew Ramage is a graduate of Oregon State University and UCLA. He works in the real estate industry and lives in Los Angeles. His website is [www.socalviolin.com](http://www.socalviolin.com).**

Earlier this season, Andrew sent a 100th Anniversary YouTube video tribute to PYP. You can watch it here: [https://youtu.be/JglSzo-2\\_U4](https://youtu.be/JglSzo-2_U4)

# 100th Anniversary Alumni Activities



## PORTLAND YOUTH PHILHARMONIC

DAVID HATTNER • MUSICAL DIRECTOR

### Alumni Orchestra

DECEMBER 26, 2023

The alumni orchestra had over 100 players this year and one of them, Bill Spady, was profiled on KATU news: <https://www.kptv.com/video/2023/12/27/portland-youth-philharmonic-celebrates-100-seasons/> Bill Spady had open heart surgery in late January and is recovering well, At his 2-week follow up, he got approval to practice breathing on his trumpet mouthpiece.

### PJS/PYP Alumni Reunion on Zoom

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024, 4:30 – 6:00 PM PDT

Alumni who attended: Bill Spady (1957), Judy Lou Johnston Clarence (1962), Victoria Poullette Jicha (1963), Martha Bailey (1975), Irene Delessert and Greg Gadeholt (1980), Brenda Ray Scott (1984), Ruth Sadilek (1985), and Jacob Youn (2022). Nine others registered, but could not connect or attend for some reason. Weather was a BIG factor in Portland and possibly elsewhere. The group had fun anyway, telling stories of some favorite memories, and what playing in the orchestra meant then and looking back now.

### Love Notes

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2024

An Evening of Jazz to benefit PYP was held at The Hallowed Halls recording studio of alumnus Robert Langslet (PYP 2006). Performers included Robert on piano, Kate Davis (PYP 2009) on vocals, Eric Gruber, bass, and Christopher Brown (alumnus Mel Brown's son), drums, with Mitchell Nelson, PYP's Box Office Manager, sitting in on trumpet. PYP friends and family celebrated Valentine's Day and PYP's first concert date, February 14, 1925, while enjoying the music with wine and desserts. Organized by your Alumni Task Force, this was a first-time jazz event that just might become a tradition!

### Alumni In-Person Play-along Sightreading

MARCH 2, 2:00 – 4:00 PM

First Congregational Church, 1126 SW Park, Portland, OR 97205, same block as the Performing Arts Center. Enter on Madison. We have three or more rooms available for small ensembles to play in, with a piano in one room. Just fill out our [Play-Along survey](#) to let us know you can come. Without sign-ups, we will cancel.

This is the same venue for our **Friends of PYP Pre-Concert Talk and Reception** with two members of Imani Winds and David Hattner at 6:00 PM. Alumni are invited to attend and become official Friends of PYP. Please RSVP for the reception to [Kristan@portlandyouthphil.org](mailto:Kristan@portlandyouthphil.org).

### Next Alumni Reunion on Zoom

APRIL 6, 2024, AT 10:00 AM PACIFIC TIME

We are scheduling after the East Coast Tour, so alumni who attend the March concerts can tune in and share their impressions with the rest of us. [Click here to register.](#)



# Alumni Updates



## Gary Guthman

(PJS 1969-73)

Gary Guthman last wrote a recollection of Mr. A in the Winter 2022 issue of this newsletter. It was an excerpt from his memoir, *Tootin' My Own Horn*, that has a chapter about his time in PJS. Gary lives in Poland, is married to a Polish professional harpist, and has published his memoir first in Polish. Although he is still searching for a publisher for an English translation, he recently updated us about his 2022 recordings and the success of his musical, *Letter from Warsaw*, now in its 5th year of performances, telling a story about the lost history of a 1,000-year relationship between Catholic and Jewish Poles. Visit Gary's fascinating website to see videos of performances by Gary and by his wife, MAŁGORZATA ZALEWSKA, and read about all his performance and composition projects.

**Here is Gary's home web page:**

<https://www.musicadocet.org/>

**Direct link to the musical page:**

<https://www.musicadocet.org/letter-from-warsaw>

### Recent compositions, recordings, and concerts:

[Concerto for Harp, & Orchestra](#) / Concerto for Trumpet & Orchestra Album (2022) / composer / performer

[Concerto for Flute & Orchestra Album \(2022\)](#) /composer

[The Traveler Album \(2022\)](#) / composer

[Łódź Fantasy](#) / Premier performance (August, 2023) / composer

[Qui ingreditur sine macula](#) / Premier performance (September, 2023) / composer

### Recent and Upcoming Performances:

**December 30, 2023:** "SALUTE TO SWING"- Symphony Pops, Jelenia Góra, Poland

**February 10, 2024:** "SALUTE TO SWING" - Symphony Pops / Warsaw, Poland

**March 15, 2024:** GUTHMAN CONCERTO FOR TRUMPET & ORCHESTRA / Olsztyn, Poland



## Daniel Avshalomov

(PREP 1963-64, PJS 1965-71)

Rather like the process by which stars are formed from interstellar matter and the force of gravity [though on a smaller scale], our recent Winter Solstice recital in Portland, with Pamela Pyle and David Hattner, grew from a happy convergence of several discrete elements.

With my retirement from the American String Quartet approaching at the end of this season, I had begun thinking about a way to re-introduce myself to Portland's musical scene. And when my friend, pianist Pamela Pyle, called to ask whether we might play



# Alumni Updates

together again, it seemed just right. It also suited her needs, as she was being considered for full professorship at UNM, where she has been teaching for some time, and that entailed performances outside of New Mexico.

At the same time, I had long wanted to perform with Maestro Hattner; we had had many conversations, and of course I knew he was an accomplished clarinetist, but we hadn't had an opportunity to work together.

The choice of venue was equally serendipitous: I had begun my violin studies at age 5 with Isadore Tinkleman, and my lessons were either at his home or at CMC, so it seemed like closing the circle to return there. The next step was easy – I contacted CMC's director, Gregory Dubai, who had studied chamber music with me at the Taos School of Music and at the Manhattan School of Music. Gregory, a PJS alum, could not have been more helpful, and we quickly agreed that the event could be presented as a fund-raiser for the two institutions which do so much for the cultural life of our city.

Then it was just a matter of choosing a program and doing a bit of rehearsing – and availing ourselves of the wonderful support from the people of CMC and PYP. I must say, it was especially gratifying to see an audience nearly all of whom I knew by name. Hard to imagine a more auspicious situation.

It will be good to be back to stay.

## Zel Brook

**(PJS 1961-65, CURRENT PYP BOARD MEMBER)**

As an orchestra alum, I am writing to answer two questions. First, what did the Portland Youth Philharmonic do to foster my development in the field of visual art? Secondly, why did the experience of playing in the Portland Junior Symphony remain a pivotal life event?

The sole experience I had as a youth working with a group of musicians to achieve excellence taught me five essential things. **1.** The value of taking on difficult tasks and not giving up. **2.** Taking risks a.k.a. go big or go home. **3.** Solving complex problems. **4.** Working hard. **5.** Finding a pathway to achieving a goal.

Today, I am scarred by 17 medical surgeries and events. Unable to play music, I have taken the above five things and arrived as a visual artist making sculpture, painting,

drawing and photography. Read more at [ZelBrook.com](http://ZelBrook.com).

You can see the progression in my recent retrospective art show at the Benton County Historical Society, in Philomath, OR, with welded forms, drawing, painting, photographs and kinetic sculptures. By the time anyone reads this, a 70 foot outdoor sculpture will be nearing completion. It will remain standing like music and memory, through wind, rain and adversity long after I am gone. It is located near the beat of running, pounding feet moving just like music. My most important lesson from the Portland Junior Symphony was to rely on my ability to get to a form of expression that may not be music but, well... perhaps it is.

Learn more about Zel Brook's art at [ZelBrook.com](http://ZelBrook.com).



*Barn Roof*



*Welded Steel Running Leg*

# In Memoriam



## Marilyn Hanthorn Baker Van Natta

**NOVEMBER 6, 1936 – NOVEMBER 13, 2023**

After WWII, Marilyn's family moved to Portland, Oregon, where her grandfather introduced her to the violin and thus began her life-long journey with music. While attending Grant High School in Portland, Marilyn joined the Portland Junior Symphony and throughout her life often credited PYP for building the skills and experience that fueled her professional career.

Marilyn earned her Bachelor of Arts in Applied Music from Willamette University in 1957. In 1962, she and her son Lucian moved to Los Angeles where Marilyn found a vibrant and active career and joined both the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), Local 47 and the National Association of Recording Arts & Sciences (NARAS).

Marilyn regularly worked with numerous groups, theaters and orchestras throughout the LA area in addition to teaching. Once Lucian was grown, she also enjoyed touring around the world with various performers and could entertain friends for hours with her many stories of orchestral life on the road.

Marilyn retired to Portland, OR in 2007, where she continued teaching violin and viola as well as staying in touch with the many musicians she had mentored and worked with over the years. Even in "retirement" Marilyn still played in local quartets, gave chamber music presentations and often worked with the Newport Symphony Orchestra.

In September 2015, she married a dear friend from her Willamette University days, Kay C. Van Natta, and moved to his family tree farm located near Rainier, Oregon. Very quickly she won the hearts of the local grange and resource communities with her down-to-earth kindness, logic and willingness to lend a hand whenever possible. Her special light will be missed in these communities, as well as by musicians up and down the West coast.

The family hosted a Celebration of Marilyn's Life on Saturday, December 2nd. In lieu of flowers, they requested that donations in Marilyn's memory be directed to either the Portland Youth Philharmonic or the Rainier Oregon Historical Museum where she was a volunteer.

### ADDENDUM:

About a year ago, Kristan Knapp and Gyrid (Avolesi) Hyde-Towle went to visit Marilyn in her home in the woods. It was an adventure just getting there, but we had a wonderful time with Marilyn and Kay C., filled with stories of music and their college days. Last May, Marilyn donated to PYP her Robert Robinson violin, purchased for her on her 14th birthday by her parents from her teacher James Eoff.



## Maria Casale

**DECEMBER 13, 1962 –  
JANUARY 6, 2024**

Maria Casale, who joined the Portland Youth Philharmonic in 1977, began harp studies at the age of six with Sister Emerentia at Marylhurst College in Portland, Oregon. In 1980, she entered the Juilliard School of Music in NYC, studying under Susann McDonald, where she earned her Bachelor and Masters Degrees. It was at Juilliard that she met her husband, Christopher Hanulik, whom she married in 1987. Maria went on to become a world-class award-winning concert harpist, most notably being the gold medal winner of the first USA International Harp Competition in 1989. Her solo debut recital in 1990 at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, brought her critical acclaim.

She was a featured soloist at the 1990 World Harp Congress in Paris and the 1999 World Harp Congress in Prague. She performed as soloist with many major orchestras, including the Israel Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Orchestra Sinfónica Nacional. She also performed with many southern California orchestras and with the Oregon Symphony. She was Professor of Harp at Pepperdine University and at Cal State Northridge, as well as teaching privately.

Maria was devoted to her husband, Christopher Hanulik, principal bassist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and her two children, Nicholas and Isabella.

Here is a link to a house concert performed by Maria and Christopher from the Los Angeles Philharmonic site: <https://www.laphil.com/about/watch-and-listen/la-phil-at-home-chris-hanulik-and-maria-casale?watch-and-listen=>

# Centennial Philanthropy

BY W. GREG BERTON (PJS 1971-75)

From the time I was a small child, I was emotionally affected by music. I would get tears in my eyes every time I heard that “Jackie Paper came no more” in the song, “Puff, the Magic Dragon” and would cheer myself up by playing drums on the living room furniture to Herb Alpert’s “Whipped Cream and Other Delights.” Coincidentally, this was in Burns, OR where our PJS founder Mary Dodge came from.

I started learning music on piano and then later string bass and when we moved to Portland I joined the PYP prep orchestra right away. My great leap forward came during the PYP’s 50th season when the organization sent me to the Aspen Music Festival to study with the revered Stuart Sankey. That is where I learned – much to my great happiness and surprise – that I was considered diligent in my practice discipline and talented enough to compete in the professional orchestra world. Four years later as a junior in college studying with Mr. Sankey, I was runner-up in the Houston Symphony Bass auditions and the next year I was playing Principal Bass for the Symphonisches Orchester Berlin.

I have marveled ever since that a young man from my background, with no professional musicians in the family, minimal exposure to classical music, and from a decidedly modest home, would even have a chance to succeed in the world of classical music. The depth of my gratitude to the PYP for the training, the Aspen experience, and the life lessons learned is unbounded.

But gratitude is not the primary reason I give to the PYP. The reason I give is for the music! What does that mean? I feel that classical orchestral music is one of the highest achievements of mankind. I know this because I spent my lifetime performing classical and chamber music and watching the faces of audiences who experienced it! Who would believe that century after century people are still drawn to, delighted by, and ever more supportive of this unique art form.

It’s an expression of engagement and entertainment where not only is each instrument still lovingly handcrafted of natural materials, but also played acoustically by musicians who dedicate much of their lives to a single calling. These are musicians who perform some of mankind’s most eloquent creations from a repertoire spanning half a millennium. If you ask



*Rosanne and Greg Berton*

musicians why they endure the practicing, the rehearsals, the expense, and the competition most will tell you... it’s for the love of the music. And this is why I want to be generous to the PYP, to allow it to thrive and grow and bring this musical gift to even more young people.

I believe strongly that each and every child deserves to be exposed to live classical performances and have the opportunity to try an instrument. I believe that each child who thrives in their musical performance deserves a chance to develop that talent regardless of their economic circumstances. I believe PYP is an incubator of lifelong habits of discipline, teamwork, patience, and decorum and it’s a place where creative children can thrive. Most of all, I look at PYP – the oldest and perhaps finest program in the United States – as a prime contributor to that magical thing that is nothing short of a living museum, a repository of knowledge passed down through the centuries and an entity that gives the music expression...it is this miracle called a Symphony Orchestra.

So, thanks once again to the PYP for allowing me to share my enthusiasm! Whatever your motivations for giving, I hope you will join me in generously helping the PYP celebrate this amazing centenary year and continue to impact the lives of children for the next 100!



# East Coast Alumni Invitation

Have you heard? **PYP and Musical Director David Hattner** are heading to the **East Coast to give three concerts at the end of March, to celebrate our 100th Anniversary Season!** You are especially invited to attend and please invite your friends. We are asking PYP's alumni network to help generate interest to hear the nation's first youth orchestra perform with renowned, and now GRAMMY award-winning **Imani Winds**, in concert near you. Tickets are now on sale.

## Concert dates, locations, and ticket links:

- **Monday, March 25, 7:00 PM**, [Strathmore Hall](#), N. Bethesda, MD
- **Thursday, March 28, 7:30 PM**, [Neidorff-Karpati Hall](#), [Manhattan School of Music](#), NY City
- **Friday, March 29, 7:00 PM**, [Mechanics Hall](#), Worcester, MA

We can think of no one better than you to help spread the word about PYP's first East Coast appearance since 2004. You know this orchestra well and PYP's legacy is legendary, but not everyone has had the opportunity to hear it in concert, especially on the East coast.

Could you commit to inviting friends? Do you know promotion networks we could tap into? Is there a local youth orchestra that would be inspired to see and hear PYP? Is there a radio or TV station that would interview David Hattner or tell PYP's Centennial story ahead of our arrival? Would you like to organize a gathering to meet the musicians?

For this concert David Hattner has selected three exquisite pieces spanning 125 years.

- **Jeff Scott's "Paradise Valley Serenade"** (2021), featuring Imani Winds
- **Amy Beach's "Gaelic Symphony"** (1894)
- **Jessie Montgomery's "Strum"** (2012) for string orchestra

Jessie just won a GRAMMY for Best Contemporary Classical Composition! Jeff and Imani Winds participated in the album *Passion for Bach and Coltrane* that won Best Classical Compendium.

If you live near these venues, we know you will be thrilled to hear today's orchestra perform with Imani Winds, and encourage you to reach out to us with any ideas you may have for how to introduce PYP to your community. Working together we can make this once-in-a-lifetime 100th Anniversary Tour a success!

Thank you for your ideas and enthusiasm,



Kristan Knapp  
PYP Alumni Relations



The poster features a group of musicians in formal attire, some playing instruments like a trumpet and saxophone. The text on the poster includes: "CELEBRATING 100 YEARS", "1924 PYP 2024", "PORTLAND YOUTH PHILHARMONIC", "DAVID HATTNER • MUSICAL DIRECTOR", "Serenade in the Wind", "PYP & Imani Winds East Coast Tour", and the concert dates and locations: "March 25, 2024 | 7:00 PM EST | The Music Center at Strathmore, MD", "March 28, 2024 | 7:30 PM EST | Manhattan School of Music, NY", and "March 29, 2024 | 7:00 PM EST | Mechanics Hall, MA". A link for tickets and information is provided at the bottom: "Tickets and information: [portlandyouthphil.org/concerts](https://portlandyouthphil.org/concerts)".

# Looking Back

BY JUDY O. ROMPA (PJS 1976-PYP 1984)

## Ernestine Oringdulph, Orchestra Mom

(PSJ 1972-PYP 1994)

Like many alumni, my years in the PJS/PYP were filled with weeks of Wednesday evening and Saturday morning rehearsals, fun theory classes (loved the theory bee), lots of sectionals (not my favorite), playing many great symphonic works, making life-long friends, and all those fun concerts (loved the children's concerts) and of course our orchestra tours. However, my experience had one unique aspect that no one else had... my mom was the Orchestra Mom.

Ernie gave her ALL to this organization and made sure our City knew what a treasure it had. She loved all the players, had a wonderful relationship with Mr. and Mrs. A., and doing all she could to make this organization a success gave her such joy. There are many Ernie moments I could share, but I'll stick with two.

Mending Music! Anyone remember my mom and Barbara Segerstrom "mending" music during rehearsal? Our dining room table at home was always covered with music, beige colored folders, wax string and a metal "pounder." She would sew the music into these folders and pound the string to secure it. I can still hear the pounding in my head. Always a joke at home was that the dining room table was mom's workstation. On rehearsal days, she'd pack her bags and boxes and continue her work at the school. She would spread out on one of the tables and recruit any interested parent to help her mend. I remember a few times when Mr. A would give her the stink eye and tell her to be quiet! Ha! My mom would give him the look back and continue in a quieter manner. (She never let Mr. A. ruffle her feathers like he did a lot of us!)

Another activity that consumed her time was "Sing Your Own Messiah." I remember helping her at Benson High School, spending hours decorating the auditorium and dividing the seats into sections (soprano, alto, bass and tenor). It was such fun and it brought mom so much joy to organize it and see it be so successful. It was such a community success that it had to move to the Keller Auditorium to accommodate the crowd. I think one of the most memorable parts of this story was Mr. A. asking

her to conduct the Hallelujah Chorus. To this day, I can still picture her conducting in front of the orchestra she loved. What a proud moment for her, to be immersed in the music (not just back stage), for this magical event that she brought to the City of Portland. I'm sure she absolutely loved that experience.

Ernie, as Orchestra Mom, certainly left a legacy behind. If you were in the orchestra while she was a part of it, I'm sure you can share a memory or two. I certainly miss her!



*Barbara Segerstrom, left and Ernestine Oringdulph, right, with host on 1992 Asia Tour.*



# Looking Back

1944 A special section of the Lake Oswego Review and West Linn Tidings

## SENIOR FOCUS

### SHE KNOWS THE SCORE

Ruth Leupold is part of youth symphony's roots

By KEITH KLIPPSTEIN  
Staff Reporter



Ruth Leupold says she never was much of a musician, but she's still been instrumental in the birth and recent operation of what's known now as the Portland Youth Philharmonic Orchestra.

All a child, Leupold, a Lake Oswego resident, was there at the roots of the philharmonic orchestra, also known as the PYP. Surprisingly enough, she can start the tale in 1913 with the Sogahon Orchestra in Burns before spinning it through two more stages — the Irvington School Orchestra and the Portland Junior Symphony, the latter of which began with a debut concert Feb. 14, 1925.

Though Leupold was a violinist with the junior symphony only one year — she soon grew past the age limit — she's always been an avid fan of the youth orchestra. She met her husband through the symphony, her granddaughter played violin for the group and has continued to play, and she was a symphony board member for about 20 years.

She still continues as an honorary board member.

But what she does beyond the call of duty, as she has for years, is keep track of the PYP as members work toward a concert that means seeing rehearsals as the musical pieces are put together.

Those visits lately have been less frequent, but the reputation is still there.

"I advise anyone who wants to see young people at work to go and see the orchestra at rehearsal," said Leupold, 87. "They are disciplined but not brown-brothered" under the direction of long-time conductor Jacob Avshalomov, she added.

Full orchestra rehearsals are held from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays at Hancock School, 325 S.E. 51st Ave., Portland. It's there where the music begins to be revealed by the young musicians before it comes to full flower in concert.

"Sure, going to the concerts is a good idea," Leupold said. "But if you just do that, you don't know the thrill of what happened between the rehearsals and concerts, and you can only understand the orchestra when you attend rehearsals."

For this year's opening concert in November, PYP members huddle in September to begin taking and translating their notes into music.

"I always love to go to first rehearsals," Leupold said. "You can hear them progress as you listen to them. Mr. A. (Avshalomov) says he likes to pass it on by the first concert, they're at their peak."

See Leupold, page 2

• Generic drugs may not always be the best choice, especially for elderly patients, that's according to local pharmacist Gene Watson and physician Riccardo Foglia. See page 3.

• Local senior citizens need look no further than area public agencies and organizations to find services aimed at helping them. See page 6.

• Retired and bored? The Lake Oswego Adult Community Center and the "AWCA," among others, can help. They make it their business to provide courses that are sure to keep senior citizens active. See page 9.

• The Adult Community Center's van drivers gave 4,073 rides to the center last year. Now a new, specially equipped vehicle has been added. See page 9.

• Seniors who are looking for aid but don't know where to turn first may find the answers in the "Guidebook to Senior Resources." An updated edition is just out. See page 11.

Continued from page 1

"It's so exciting, I can't imagine sitting in the front chair (of the orchestra) today. The orchestra has stood so much change, but the orchestra itself has stayed young. Each year gets comes in with the same discipline and dedication. I believe young people thrive from discipline."

Leupold grew up as Ruth Saunders in Burns, which is primarily rural country in Eastern Oregon. Into that setting came Mary Dodge, who moved from Boston as a violinist. It was a time when the town grew because of an influx of home seekers.

"There was little music in Burns," Leupold said. "There were no violins, even."

But by 1913, Dodge created the Sogahon Orchestra. Leupold said, with help from area coffee king Bill Harzley. Four years later, as she attended high school, Leupold picked up a violin and joined the orchestra.

"It had quite a reputation," she recalled. "It was one of the first children's orchestras back then, at a time when there were no instruments to be had."

"The youngsters were dedicated. We played music within our ability to play and rehearsed enough so we were pleased enough to be heard. All I remember is, we didn't know we were starting anything."

In 1918, Dodge moved to Portland and conducted the Irvington School Orchestra. By coincidence, Leupold also was in Portland, where she continued violin lessons with Dodge and played in the orchestra, too.

"The orchestra grew and grew, and we played the 'auditorium,'" Leupold said. "It grew to the point where Mary didn't feel comfortable any more. She never felt she was a conductor like that."

That's when Dodge approached Jacques Gershtkovich to assume the conductor's baton of the youth orchestra. Leupold said that time was assistant conductor, of the No. 2 violin.

"He said he would conduct us if we would fit in the instruments we needed to be a full symphony orchestra," Leupold said. "We had no kettles, drums, no cobses, for example. We were heavy on strings and light on assisting instruments."

"Gershtkovich said he'd help us so we could play symphonic music and consented to take us. That's when we decided to name ourselves the Portland Junior Symphony."

One member, Marjorie Leupold, played piano with the symphony in time. He would marry Ruth.

"He was there to make up for

## SENIOR FOCUS

### Leupold: Group should stay together

Continued from page 1



"As I remember it, we didn't know we were starting anything"

parent activities. She also was on the "scholarship" and music committees.

"When I first went on the board, the budget was practically nothing. It was like a woman's tea party," Leupold said. "We sold Christmas cards and stationery to raise money."

"Then the symphony was offered the chance to travel to Europe, and we had to raise the money. That was a turning point. From there, we were no longer afraid of budgets, we felt we could do it."

"Now our project is to build up an endowment to support the orchestra. Someone recently mentioned to me that we've practiced a big business."

As a honorary board member, though, she said, "I'm supposed to keep my mouth shut, but that's hard for me to do."

The PYP is in fine shape, she said.

"The orchestra today is what Jacques Gershtkovich dreamed it would be," Leupold said. "It's recognized as the oldest of the youth orchestras and certainly is an example to the others in the United States."

Even though she didn't move on to be a more refined musician, Leupold said she still cherishes the opportunity she had.

"I didn't go on to be a professional player, but I was given a wonderful window to look out of," she said. "I get excited about the possibilities for these young people, and I'm nearly 88."

Her chores included working directly with the orchestra, attending rehearsals and organizing

the assisting instruments we didn't have," Ruth Leupold said. "I never did in the schools, which all had orchestras by that time. With that help, we were able to support the additional instruments, like a bassoon, that we needed."

"It had quite a reputation," she recalled. "It was one of the first children's orchestras back then, at a time when there were no instruments to be had."

"The youngsters were dedicated. We played music within our ability to play and rehearsed enough so we were pleased enough to be heard. All I remember is, we didn't know we were starting anything."

In 1918, Dodge moved to Portland and conducted the Irvington School Orchestra. By coincidence, Leupold also was in Portland, where she continued violin lessons with Dodge and played in the orchestra, too.

"The orchestra grew and grew, and we played the 'auditorium,'" Leupold said. "It grew to the point where Mary didn't feel comfortable any more. She never felt she was a conductor like that."

That's when Dodge approached Jacques Gershtkovich to assume the conductor's baton of the youth orchestra. Leupold said that time was assistant conductor, of the No. 2 violin.

"He said he would conduct us if we would fit in the instruments we needed to be a full symphony orchestra," Leupold said. "We had no kettles, drums, no cobses, for example. We were heavy on strings and light on assisting instruments."

"Gershtkovich said he'd help us so we could play symphonic music and consented to take us. That's when we decided to name ourselves the Portland Junior Symphony."

One member, Marjorie Leupold, played piano with the symphony in time. He would marry Ruth.

"He was there to make up for

## TIRED OF DENTURES?


While the majority of dentists have little or no experience with implants, isn't it nice to know we have done thousands of implant treatments at the Meridian, maintaining an overall 5-year success rate above 99%.

This probably why people from all over the United States choose the Meridian when they've decided to rid themselves of problem dentures.

You don't have to live with problem dentures or the physical and psychological damage they can cause.

• AUGMENTATION • CUSTOM IMPLANTS • ROOT FORM IMPLANTS • GRAFTS

All services including complete laboratory facility in one location.



Meridian ORAL IMPLANTS

1035 SW 51ST AVENUE 204 TUMULTU, OREGON 97042

CALL TOWDAY (503) 692-3399

THE NORTHWEST'S ONLY EXCLUSIVE ORAL IMPLANT CLINIC

Ruth Leupold, Georgia's mother, played in the first PJS concert on February 14, 1925.



Four generations of the Leupold Family attended the 100th Anniversary Season opening concert and exhibit reception with Georgia Leupold Marshall, age 98.



# Looking Forward

## “Celebrating 100” Fundraising Luncheon

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 11:30-1:30 PM

MILLER HALL AT THE WORLD FORESTRY CENTER

Celebrating 100 Fundraising Luncheon is your chance to make a significant 100th anniversary gift to PYP. We are seeking alumni gifts for a matching pool to inspire and challenge donors in the room. With an ultimate goal of \$150,000, we need a minimum of \$50,000 pledged to our matching pool. Thank you for your consideration. Please let us know of your interest and whether you would like to discuss your options, including event sponsorship. Contact Kristan or [John@portlandyouthphil.org](mailto:John@portlandyouthphil.org).

## April and May Concerts

April and May will be packed with multiple concerts by all ensembles, and will culminate in a Grand Finale at the Schnitzer Hall with special guests, Thomas Lauderdale and Hunter Noack on Friday, May 31st [See our website for dates and tickets](#). Livestreaming is still available for many of the performances.



## Sagebrush to Stumptown Reprise

PYP's 100th anniversary exhibit will be on display again—at the ArtReach Gallery at First Congregational Church, 1126 SW Park, in April and May. This reprise will give Portlanders and alumni families another chance to learn about PYP's astonishing history. If you missed it at the Oregon Historical Society, or are considering coming to Portland for the Grand Finale Concert, you will have another opportunity. We will not be able to display all the cases of memorabilia, but the wall panels will be hung for you to see.

And wherever you live, **please visit our new digital museum site**, hosted by History IT, and sponsored by the Leupold & Stevens Foundation. It is just getting started, but has so much potential. You'll find a timeline that expands on the **Sagebrush to Stumptown** exhibit at <https://Portlandyouthphil.Historyit.com>. Eventually we hope to have recordings, rosters, programs and more available to you and the public on this site.



## Calling all retired oboists!

The Portland Youth Philharmonic, where your musical journey began, is reaching out for your support. We at PYP are seeking out a gently used oboe to expand our instrument rental collection for students who might not have access to quality instruments. Your generosity will open doors for talented young musicians who might otherwise miss out on the transformative power of orchestral playing. Consider giving your beloved instrument a new voice, one that will resonate throughout the rehearsal spaces of PYP for years to come.

If you have any questions, please reach out to our PYP Operations Manager, Phylcia Morris at: [phylcia@portlandyouthphil.org](mailto:phylcia@portlandyouthphil.org)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Season 100 is here!

Join your colleagues to celebrate this amazing milestone.  
Become an official Centennial Friend of PYP with a gift of \$100 or more.  
Lock in a gift match and receive a commemorative pin.

Read inside: Alumni activities, East coast tour, and how to join in wherever you are.

Visit our website [www.portlandyouthphil.org/alumni](http://www.portlandyouthphil.org/alumni) to update your contact information and share your memories of playing in PJS/PYP.

If you would like to receive a digital link to this newsletter, please let us know by subscribing on our website, or by sending an email to Kristan Knapp at the address below.

Article suggestions or submissions may also be sent to our mailing address or emailed to [kristan@portlandyouthphil.org](mailto:kristan@portlandyouthphil.org).

To share information over the phone, call Kristan Knapp at 503-828-0984.

We look forward to hearing from you,  
meeting you at a concert, or seeing you online.