



TASO NEWS

Texas Association for Symphony Orchestras

The purpose of this organization shall be, "To promote, develop and support symphony orchestras"

Celebrating 55 Years Fall - 2023



Ann Graham to retire as Texans for the Arts Executive

This week Texans for the Arts (TFA), a non-partisan statewide arts advocacy organization, announced that Executive Director Ann S. Graham will retire this fall.

After ten years of dedicated service, **Ann S. Graham**, Executive Director of Texans for the Arts (TFA), will retire on October 31st, 2023. Under Ann's outstanding and effective leadership, Texans for the Arts has experienced exponential growth and success, solidifying its role as the state-wide champion for public funding for the arts. Graham's relentless advocacy efforts oversaw an historic increase - quadrupling appropriations to the Texas Commission on the Arts and resulting in more public support for arts organizations across the state, increasing TFA organizational memberships by 100%, passing landmark Hotel Occupancy Tax legislation, laying the foundation for enlisting, training and engaging hundreds of citizen leaders.

When asked about her greatest accomplishment, Graham is most proud of raising the public's awareness of the deeply valuable intersections of the arts to community life, making the case as to why investing public resources in the arts is a vital contribution to community health. Graham never passed up an opportunity to ensure that "the arts are in the room" when

discussing and taking action around the public investment in the arts.

During the time of COVID, Graham played a pivotal role in securing COVID relief funding for arts organizations across the state, including CARES, SVOG, and ARPA. She helped plant the seed of the idea in Houston which led to \$5 million for Houston-based arts organizations through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Graham ensured once again that the arts were "in-the-room" with the Texas Travel Industry Recovery Program, which distributed \$180 million to the travel, tourism and arts, and she is currently serving on the Governor's Office of Broadband/Capital Regional Task Force.

Ann thanks TASO profusely for being such a terrific partner with Texans for the Arts. "TASO takes every opportunity to speak up on behalf of public funding for the arts and recognizes the value of the arts in our everyday lives and across our communities. TASO is one of the hardest working service organizations I have ever worked with and their dedication to ensuring that their communities have access to high quality, creative, artistic experiences speaks volumes. They are tireless advocates and Texans for the Arts is proud to be a partner! Thank you for the opportunity to celebrate our collective work together!"



Ann S. Graham

Juanita Miller Concerto Competition

Sunday, January 7, 2024
SMU, Owens Art Center, Dallas
Jan Woodward will be setting up a sign-up genius! So, don't forget to volunteer for this wonderful opportunity where you will see some of our young musicians compete.

A Symphony of Roses
TASO TYLER 2024
April 4-6

President's Letter



It is an honor to serve as your TASO President this year. I am blessed to have a wonderful supportive Executive Committee and board. Closing out the 2022-2023 year, the TASO annual conference in April hosted by the Austin Women's Symphony League was truly a great experience with wonderful speakers and fresh ideas.

Having completed our first quarterly board meeting in June, it was uplifting to learn of the support of the Arts by the Texas legislature this year. Thank you notes have been sent to Representative **Mary Gonzalez**, **Senator Joan Huffman**, **Senator Charles Schwertner**, and **Senator Juan Hinojose** on behalf of TASO thanking them for their support of the arts.

It is always enjoyable hearing what is going on in our Guilds/Leagues around the state at our quarterly board meetings. Nice to hear that San

Antonio now has a Philharmonic Orchestra that was founded by their musicians. A couple of orchestras are looking for new Executive Directors, and good to hear about successful fundraising projects by others. Looking forward to learning about these successful projects at the Conference in April, 2024 in Tyler.

One common theme that I heard at our June meeting is the challenge all of the Guilds/League face in not only maintaining their membership but also growing their membership. How do we, TASO, increase our membership? What is our message of the value that TASO brings to a Orchestra's leadership and members? I am pleased that one focus this year of the Strategic Planning Committee is increasing TASO membership.

Thank you to **Deb Happ** and **Deborah Brown** for getting our TASO Handbooks and documents on the TASO website. By placing these documents on our website, it is easy to keep our information current and also saves TASO money. Hopefully all of you have found it easy to access. No one has asked to have the Handbook printed which is encouraging.

Thanks to **Helen Shaffer** our October 2nd TASO Board Meeting guest speaker will be **Ann Graham**, Executive Director of Texans for the Arts (TFA). Retiring October 31st from TFA, we are fortunate to have Ann with us before her retirement.

Keep up the good work all of you are doing in your local guilds/leagues and remember you are making a difference.

I think music in itself is healing. It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music.

Billy Joel

Darlene Morford
TASO President

*Newsletter Deadlines; December 1, 2023 and March 1, 2024
TASO Newsletter Editor, Sandy Secor, sandrasecor@icloud.com*

The Women's Symphony League of Austin

The Women's Symphony League of Austin had a busy spring and summer. In May, the Princesses and Visiting Jewels were announced at the Jewel Tea. Thank you to the the TASO organizations who send college-age representatives to celebrate the symphony each September at Jewel Ball events.

Throughout summer vacation, volunteers assisted with the "Austin Symphony Orchestra's Tuneful Tales" (formerly Children's Day Art Park) at the downtown Austin public library. Youngsters enjoyed making percussion instruments, visiting the Instrument Zoo to see, touch and play the instruments; talking to Symphony musicians and interacting during the performance. The Fourth of July brought a fantastic musical and fireworks celebration along the shores of Lady Bird Lake. Volunteers assisted with VIP tables and lawn guests while enjoying the ASO's spectacular performance.

Now our sites are turned towards Jewel Ball festivities. Come spend the weekend with us! Join us at The Fashion Luncheon Lone Star-Studded Style Friday, September 15, 2023, where we are excited to announce the panel of not just one, but THREE amazing guests: **Loreal Sarkisian** - An Austin-based, multi-faceted business woman, wardrobe stylist, philanthropist, former track star, and the "First Lady of Longhorn Football."



Above: The Fourth of July in Austin. Right: Tuneful Tales. Bottom: Melissa and Frank Jackson, Jewel Ball Honorary Chairs.

Lela Rose - A New York City-based, American fashion designer and author (and a native of Texas) widely regarded for her elegant aesthetic and passion for style, design and decor.

Katie Kime - An Austin-based designer with a passion for creative print design. Bringing color, whimsy and a sense of humor to the most functional, everyday pieces, her designs are traditional ware meets colorful, modern prints -- always optimistic, bright, and unexpected.

Then on Saturday, September 16, attend the Jewel Ball Under the Texas Stars featuring Honorary Chairs **Melissa and Frank Jackson**. You many have met Melissa, through her work as The University of Texas Executive Director of External Relations. The couple says, "We are excited to celebrate the countless hours of work and dedication of WSL members, whose contributions ensure that musical education reaches far and wide."



Dallas Symphony Orchestra League

Debutantes Participate in Divot Stomp at Annual Honor Guard Polo Cup

The Dallas Symphony Orchestra League Debutantes and Honor Guard proudly partnered with the Prestonwood Polo Club for an evening of polo matches, dinner and drinks and halftime activities. The annual Honor Guard Polo Cup was held at the Prestonwood Polo Club in Oak Point on June 24. The Debutantes, Honor Guard, and their families viewed the polo games from the pavilion, with many wearing their best derby hats.

The Debutantes participated in the traditional divot stomp. Divot stomping is a long-standing tradition where spectators converge on the field to stomp down the turf that has been torn up by the ponies' hooves. Attendees gathered on the field for a glass of Champagne, photo opportunities with players and horses, and meet club owner, **Vaughn Miller**. Miller is the son of **Tincy Miller** who founded the Presentation Ball in 1987. He was among the first group of Honor Guards in the inaugural year. His family continues the tradition of support for the Presentation Ball. Daughter **Gigi** made her debut this year and sons **Vance Miller, III** and **Vaughn Miller, Jr.** served as Honor Guards. The Presentation Ball is the largest fundraiser for the DSOL and over \$15 million has been raised for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra through the annual event.



Top: **Prestonwood Polo Honor Guard Cup**; Left below: **Newt, Bronwyn, Kristin** (DSOL Debutante Ball Chairman) and **Bob Cordiak**; Right: **Nancy** (DSOL President) and **Paul Labadie**.

"We are so grateful to the Miller, family for their incredible Prestonwood Polo Club venue," said Presentation Ball chair **Kristin Cordiak**. "The Honor Guard Polo Cup evening was exciting with the horses, players, champagne divot stomp - all fabulous fun!!"

The evening was one of the season events for the debutantes which culminate with the 38th Presentation Ball, to be held on February 10, 2024.

"This Presentation Season is filled with fun events, and we have the added focus of

bringing music education to our community through the DSO Education and Outreach Programs," said DSOL President **Nancy Labadie**.

Founded in 1946, the DSOL's mission is to support the Dallas Symphony Orchestra through service, education and fundraising activities. Since 1998 the League has contributed over \$22 million in support of the Dallas Symphony Association's Community Outreach and Education programs, which help bring the wonder of the DSO to thousands of youths and adults in the Dallas Metroplex.

Houston Symphony League

Summer Neighborhood Concerts

Houston Symphony League members staffed the always popular Instrument Petting Zoo for four Summer Neighborhood Concerts in June. The concerts were in underserved areas of Houston – Kashmere High School, Willowridge High School, Austin High School, and Wheeler Baptist Church. League volunteers worked alongside community volunteers, many high school band and orchestra members, to show children how to make sounds with a variety of instruments, including strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion.

Does this make a difference? Yes. One mother said that her daughter had tried various instruments at the Neighborhood Concerts last year, fell in love with the cello, and now takes cello lessons. The mother was thankful to the Symphony for offering this experience to children and said she hopes we never stop.

Thanks to **Jeff and Rita Aron, Joanna Booth, Robert Chanon, Darlene Clark, Kathy Cook, Mary Fusillo, Deb Happ, Gabriel Lizmi, Michelle Nainani, Leslie Nossaman, and Brittany Pizzano** for sharing their time and expertise with the children.

MARGARITA NIGHT

Another Houston Symphony League season has begun! Las Banditos, **Donna Mello** and **Leslie Nossaman**, coordinated another successful and ever



Top: Summer concert. Right: Margarita picture of **Donna Mello** and **Leslie Nossaman**

popular Margarita Night, AKA The Unofficial Opening of the League's new season. **Ninfa's Restaurant** was generous with their margarita pours and the Caesar salad was so refreshing in this sweltering Texas heatwave. "The Most Festive Award", chosen by the waitstaff, went to **Leslie Nossaman** for her vintage Mexican dress, belt, jewelry, and hat decorated with milagros (used for good luck, prayers, and protection). Volunteers **Brittany Williams, Donna Mello, and Julie Brand** did a bang-up job crafting beautiful paper flowers to add color and that air of festivity. Everyone is already looking forward to next year!

Plano Symphony Orchestra Guild

2023 What a Summer!

In most years, the time between the last concert in the spring and the first concert in the fall is a relatively quiet period. Not true in 2023 for the Plano Symphony Orchestra and Guild! Here are some of the activities that have kept us busy and we wouldn't have it any other way!



The PSO 40th Anniversary Gala, A Ruby Affair Celebrating Connections, was held on June 10, 2023 to cap off the 40th Anniversary of the PSO and 40 years of **Hector Guzman** as Music Director. **Darlene Morford** and **Deborah Hendrix** were co-chairs and honorary chairs were **Pat and Bruce Morrice**. The PSO also honored **Christian and Rudy Andrea, The Andrea-Mennan Family Foundation**, with our 2023 Community Award. The gala included drinks, silent auction, live auction and Fund the Mission to support the PSO's education and community outreach programs

throughout North Texas. A pre-gala cocktail party was held for sponsors and there was an optional after gala event to cap off the evening. Entertainment was provided by PSO orchestra members. The dress was business to glamorous and many wore red. Almost 400 persons were in attendance and had a great time. Numerous comments were received that this was the best gala yet. We had 14 corporate and individual sponsors and 22 table sponsors. Net proceeds exceeded our budget for the gala. Needless to say, it takes a village of volunteers to organize and support a gala. Happy Anniversary PSO!

The PSO returned to having our Patriotic Pops concert on July 4 at 3 pm after it had been on hiatus during COVID. It was a wonderful concert filled with both patriotic and Americana music. One of the high lights was premiering a Dallas based 24 year old American composer Quinn Mason composition "Inspiration!—Festive Overture for Orchestra". The concert was enjoyed by over 1000 attendees. It was nice to experience live music on a hot summer afternoon in the air conditioning with plenty of time afterward to enjoy family events and fireworks. The Guild Concert Services Committee was in full swing for the event. Happy Birthday America!

The PSO's inaugural Summer Music Camp was held July 10-21 for middle school and high school students. **Dr. Jennifer Wheeler**, Education Director, and **Shira Samuels-Shragg**,



Dr. Jennifer Wheeler and Shira Samuels-Shragg

Associate Conductor, led the camp with support by the Education Committee. The Music Camp was developed to support the musical growth of middle and high school musicians in the North Texas community since our School Concert Program and our Family Concert Series targets elementary-aged students. The Camp was offered to help students fine tune their skill by learning from some of the outstanding PSO orchestra members. The middle schoolers attended half day sessions for the first week of the camp culminating in a concert on July 14. High schoolers attended half day sessions for both weeks of the camp and their concert was July 21.

Not only did the campers hone their musical skills, they had the opportunity to learn about other topics such as instrument repair, playing in a pit orchestra, etc. The cost of the Camp was quite a bargain at \$100 for middle schoolers and \$200 for high schoolers. Approximately 150 students attended which is an excellent turn out. Many notes of appreciation from parents have



Darlene Morford and Deborah Hendrix

been received. The PSO also performed a concert, Cosmic Compositions, on July 15 in conjunction with the Music Camp that was also open to the public. The local NBC station in Dallas did a story on **Shira Samuels-Shragg** and the Summer Camp and it was aired on Monday July 17. It takes a lot volunteers, from check in personnel, hall monitors, and concert support. There were over 150 volunteer slots identified for the Camp. The Camp would not have been possible without our wonderful sponsors including **Tammy and Charles Miller, Rudy and Christina Andrea, Carol and William Tempest, Nancy Freeman, Dr. Doohi Lee, Drs. Eric and Christine Hopkins** and the City of Plano. What a great experience for our students! Feedback from students, parents and sponsors has all been fabulous.

The PSO's Healing Notes programing that brings music to senior adult facilities was also held in the June, July and August. 24 concerts were held that brought live music to our seniors for whom music is so very important. **Dr. Jennifer Wheeler** developed several new programs including

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one with soprano **Haley Sicking** and a new “Elvis” tribute program. Each concert requires one to two volunteers. Healing Notes is made possible by sponsorship by **Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital of Plano, Baylor, Scott and White Hospital, the City of Plano, the Texas Commission on the Arts, Frost Bank, the AWARE Fund of the Dallas Foundation** among others. It is so amazing to see the seniors come to life when music touches their minds and hearts.

San Angelo Symphony Guild

Once our new fiscal year began in June, 2023, the San Angelo Symphony Guild Board of Directors held their annual Board Retreat and began diligently planning our “Keeping the Music Alive” themed year. This Retreat was combined with our first social of the year, Taco ‘Bout Symphony Guild”, where Board members and Guild members enjoyed a taco breakfast. The Board enlightened members about various Guild programs, and then everyone visited with each other to become better acquainted.

In early July, our Gala committee also began working on our 40th annual Gala, “Traditionally Modern Masquerade”, which will take place on January 13, 2024, in the beautiful, historic Hotel Cactus. Our second social of the summer, “Charcuterie BACHS Social” was held in late July. Members gathered, and each of us was taught how to make our own charcuterie box. A drawing was held for a \$100 gift certificate from the instructional vendor. A



Grand Prize Winners, Melody Guo, Nicole Johnson, and Elim Wong



new Novice Symphony Belle, **Kaitlyn Perlas**, was the recipient. Symphony Beaux and Belles will hold their season kick off on August 20 with an ice cream social at a local country club.

Women’s Symphony League of Tyler

The Women’s Symphony League of Tyler has been one of the primary supporters of the East Texas Symphony Orchestra for over 65 years. Each new season is highly anticipated and looked forward to.

The 2023-2024 upcoming season is filled with performances and “Music for Everyone”. The third annual Symphony in the Park will occur on Labor Day weekend. It is free to the community and will include light classics, popular and patriotic music for all ages to enjoy. Held at Tyler’s large and beautiful Bergfeld Park, it will be a casual and fun experience. Concerts at Bergfeld Park have been held since the 1930s! ETSO opens the season with a high-energy concert featuring the Lone Star State’s favorite **Asleep at the Wheel**. The Grammy-winning artists will bring their

celebrated style of American Western Swing to the Cowan Center stage for a performance with the full East Texas Symphonic Orchestra.

WSL of Tyler will begin the year with the annual Fall, Fresh & Friends, one of its two fundraisers. The goal of the evening is to reconnect with friends, welcome new members and recruit future members. It is a popular event that satisfies members’ requirements of attending meetings and supporting a fundraiser.

The Junior Symphony League for this year is comprised of 81 high school juniors and seniors. These young people serve as ushers for all ETSO concerts. They also earn service points by assisting in WSL projects throughout the year. They will hold their annual Monster Bowl in October. It is a fun party with great costumes, lots of pizza and candy, and actual bowling! The event is supported by members of WSL whose contributions last year totaled \$8,245.00. These monies are donated to the WSL Music Education programs and the East Texas Youth Orchestra.

There is great anticipation of the

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2024 TASO Conference being held in Tyler. Co-Chairs **Joan LeSauvage, Annette Findley, and Joi Smith** are busy finalizing the details. We are assured of a great event and of course look forward to hosting our Texas TASO members and friends.

Waco Symphony Council

Since 1966 the Waco Symphony Belles and Brass have been presented/honored at the WSO March concert. This year the event was expanded to a Gala. The Waco Symphony Belles and Brass were presented on Saturday, March 25 at the Midway Performing Arts Center. After the presentation, family members and friends gathered to honor the young men and women with dinner and dancing at the Ridgewood Country Club. Waco Symphony Council members **Evey Ellis** and **Laura Patillo** co-chaired this event.

On March 13, Waco Symphony Council members gathered at the home of **Rose and Rolland Goertz'** home for wine and hors d'oeuvres for a preview of the concert by **Wesley Schulz**, one of the finalists for the WSO Conductor position. We all looked forward to the concert, which was on Saturday, March 18. Maestro Schulz was joined by **John Coons** who narrated the Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. It was another magical evening.

The Waco Symphony Council held a successful Symphony of the City on April 1. Guests enjoyed wine and hors d'oeuvres at two homes where they were serenaded by musicians from



Top left: Belles at Gala. Top right: Dianne Sawyer, Marsha Green, Liz Arend, Paula McReynolds and Jennifer Richie at TASO. Bottom left: Ann Harder, WSA Pres; Suzanne Alexander, WSC Pres; Wesley Schulz, Guest Conductor; Carolyn Bess, WSA ED; and Sue Blaker Jacobson, WSO Concert Master. Bottom right: WSO musicians performing.

the Waco Symphony Orchestra. The evening ended at a third home where guests were treated to beautiful and sinfully delicious desserts and sparkling champagne. The event was co-chaired by **Dianne Sawyer** and **Betsy Reeder**.

The Waco Symphony Council was well-represented at the Annual Conference in Austin. **Liz Arend, Carolyn Bess, Marsha Green, Paula McReynolds, Jennifer Richie** and **Dianne Sawyer** attended. It was a great conference and we look forward to being in Tyler next year!

Our magical season ended on a high note On April 20, when we welcomed Guest Conductor, **Rob Fisher**, and the Emmy, Grammy, and Tony award winning vocalist, **Norm Lewis**, to the stage. Waco Hall came alive with their Broadway Magic. While Mr. Lewis was in Waco, he taught several master classes for Baylor University music students. Winners of the highly successful 60th Anniversary Raffle were announced after intermission. September 10 will find council members gathering for a brunch at **Liz and Lew Arend's** home to kick off another fabulous new year for the WSC and WSO!