**Message from Our President**

My inspiration for this letter comes from several sources: Liz’s column, “What to Love about The Cleveland Orchestra”, and the almost fifty years of amazing accomplishments by the Blossom Friends chapters on behalf of The Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom Music Center. The love of, passion for, and many hours of volunteer service on behalf of the orchestra and Blossom Music Center by the Blossom Friends community is astonishing.

I am excited to share with you that we are working on several special events for the season, as well as Opening Night, Gourmet Matinee, and Orchestra Appreciation Day. Watch for more information on these in future editions of “Blossom Notes”. As chapter leaders and members finalize plans, set goals and live out our mission for the upcoming season, I encourage each of you to let your love of the orchestra and Blossom Music Center drive your actions and decisions.

I also ask that you send Liz a sentence or two about your love of, passion for, or pride in The Cleveland Orchestra and Blossom Music Center.

*Lis Hugh, President*

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**Inside This Issue**

1. What’s to Love about The Cleveland Orchestra
2. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Concert, Valentine Tea, Blossom Chapter Contacts
3. Chapter News
4. Meet a Blossom Friend, Ways to Grow Your Membership
5. Orchestra News – Philanthropy and Advancement
6. Concert Calendar, Special Events Calendar, WCCO Calendar

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**What’s to Love about The Cleveland Orchestra**

There are many reasons to love supporting and attending The Cleveland Orchestra concerts but I thought I would just remind you of a few of these as we begin 2017.

- You can watch and hear talented musicians who have been perfecting their skills on their instruments for most of their lives.
- It’s a wonderful place to meet like-minded music lovers – both at Blossom Music Center and Severance Hall.
- It’s affordable. Be sure to check out Build Your Own Concert Package, The Cleveland Orchestra Members Club or Blossom Lawn Ticket Books (clevelandorchestra.com).
- It’s a feast for the senses – where else can you not only focus on the movements of the musicians and conductor but also hear the vibrancy of a full orchestra while being surrounded by the beauty of a 70+ year old concert hall (Severance) or the woodsy outdoors (Blossom Music Center).
- There’s something magical about losing yourself in a live performance.

*By Elizabeth McCormick*
For the 37th year, The Cleveland Orchestra will celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. with a performance at Severance Hall. There will be music from Duke Ellington, Charles Floyd, Peter Boyer, Kurt Carr, Morton Gould, and more.

The performance will take place January 15th, at 7 pm, Severance Hall. Tickets are free and will be available starting January 3rd at Severance Hall or by calling 216-231-1111 or 800-686-1141, or going online at clevelandorchestra.com.

The evening will also feature a solo performance from cellist Thomas Mesa, first-place winner in the Senior Division of the 2016 Sphinx Competition for Black and Latino string players. Additionally, the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Chorus will perform during the event. The chorus is composed of Cleveland volunteers, brought together from local churches, as well as members of the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and Blossom Festival Chorus.

Blossom Friends Chapter Presidents

- Akron - Danielle Dieterich, Danielle_m.dieterich@gmail.com
- Aurora - Kathleen “Kitchie” McGrath, bkmegrath@windstream.net
- Canton - Donna Paola, donnajpaola@gmail.com and Liz McCormick, elzimccormick@yahoo.com
- Hudson – Chapter Leader Connie Van Gilder, ejvangilder@aol.com
- Kent - Donna DiBiase, dibiase1@sbcglobal.net and Sylvia Armstrong, sylviaarmstrong330@gmail.com
- Northeast – Nancy Cruikshank, cruikshank08@att.net

For more information about joining Blossom Friends please contact the Chapter President/Leader in your area.
The Akron Chapter is excited to announce their new board – President Danielle Dieterich, Vice President Gail Round, Secretary Paula Ritterbeck, Treasurer Barbara Dieterich and Membership/PR Jean Mathews. Thank you to Jean Mathews for leading the Akron chapter the past several years.

The Aurora Chapter welcomes new President Kathleen “Kitchie” McGrath (please see page 4 as we introduce Kitchie in our new series featuring Meet a Blossom Friend) and board chairs including Vice President Peggy Krinsky, Recording Secretary Peggy Fulmer, Corresponding Secretary Dolores Oman, Co-Treasurers Kaye Lowe and Barb Wonderly, Co-Hospitality Susan Colebrook, Karen Carcioppolo and Pat Volpe, Co-Membership Kathleen OConnell-Burton and Linda Kuniega, Publicity Susan LaVine and Ex-Officio Susan Kenney. Thank you to former president Sue Kenney for her years of leadership.

Members and guests of the Kent Chapter gathered at the home of David and Janet Dix to celebrate the holiday season on December 11th. Surrounded by festive decorations, the group spent the evening listening to pianist Ryan Miller while mingling with friends and acquaintances and enjoying wine and hors d’oeuvres prepared by the hostess and the executive board members. On January 11th members carpooled to the Open Rehearsal of The Cleveland Orchestra.

The Northeast Chapter hosted a lovely fundraiser “Blossom’s Blessing” A Tribute to Emily McCartney on November 6th. After a champagne reception honoring Emily and dinner, the event concluded with a performance by Tanya Ell, assistant principal cellist with The Cleveland Orchestra.

Past President Claire Frattare was recognized at the 2016 Blossom Friends’ Annual Meeting for her years of service to the Aurora Chapter and State Board. A gift of $2,500 was donated in Claire’s honor for her years of service.
Ways to Grow Your Chapter Membership

2017 will be an exciting year for Blossom Friends of the Cleveland Orchestra, as the orchestra celebrates its 100th anniversary. It’s a time to grow each of our chapters and increase our membership. Think of your membership drive as being ongoing throughout the year.

Easier said than done? Yes, but with a few plans and consistency it can be done. Many join the BFCO because they wish to support the orchestra. Others join for the camaraderie and to make new friends. Whatever the reason, each chapter can increase their membership with a little perseverance, and making it “fun” to be a member of your chapter.

Here are ideas to consider:

- Ask each existing member to invite a friend to join. If each member did, you would achieve a 100% growth.
- If you have a new people in your neighborhood, invite them to join.
- Host a series of coffee or teas in attractive locations. Individual homes are a great draw.
- Have your members bring friends. Make it a fun, social event. (Holiday Party, Valentine Tea, Brunch, Clam Bake, Ice Cream Social, etc.)
- Have the chapter president and membership chairman give a short welcome and invitation to be a member.
- Get names and addresses of guests. Have the president or membership chairman write notes to the guests, welcoming them to join. Enclose a membership form.
- Review your membership list from the past year. Write personal notes to those who have not renewed. Follow up with a personal phone call.

Being a member of a chapter of Blossom Friends of the Cleveland Orchestra is a fantastic way to support the orchestra and host fun events with the camaraderie of friends.

Look for more ideas in the March newsletter as well as details about a membership contest.

Kaye Lowe
Co-Chair, Membership

Meet a Blossom Friend

Hello, my name is Kathleen (Kitchie) McGrath and I was elected as the President of the Aurora Chapter of the Blossom Friends of the Cleveland Orchestra (BFCO) for 2017/18. I would like to tell you why I consider my relationship to the BFCO as a true blessing in my life.

Our family is from Cincinnati, but we had lived in Ashland, OH for over 25 years. We had many dear friends, neighbors, and co-workers, but after retiring we felt that we wanted to move closer to our children and grandchildren in Northeast Ohio.

At that time, I had a very close friend living in Aurora. Mary and I grew up together in Cincinnati and went to grade and high school together; we went way back! After doing the usual searching for a new home, my husband and I settled in Aurora and bought a home only a few blocks away from Mary and her husband.

We were barely into our new home when Mary insisted I join her and her new friends who belonged to (at that time) Aurora Blossom Women’s Committee. If one knew Mary there wasn’t the option of saying “NO”; so the first event I attended was a Champagne & Chocolates get together. Well, needless to say I met so many wonderful people who welcomed me, and made me feel so comfortable to be a part of such a fun, kind, and caring group.

Now 12 years have passed and sadly to say my friend, Mary, has passed away, but she left me with a beautiful legacy – friends! Wonderful people that I can laugh with, enjoy beautiful music, and appreciate all the benefits of belonging to such a delightful organization as Blossom Friends of the Cleveland Orchestra.

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Chief Development Officer Abby Mitchell has been busy building the Philanthropy and Advancement (P&A) team since joining this past July. The Philanthropy and Advancement team is responsible for managing and guiding fundraising strategy, and securing monies from individuals, corporations, foundations and government entities.

Carolyn Teter joined the P&A team as a Major Gift Officer on December 29th. Carolyn previously worked as a major gift officer at University Hospitals within the Seidman Cancer Center, and before that was in a major gift role at the Ohio State University Fisher College of Business. She is a classically trained pianist and has a deep love of music that will serve her well in her new role.

Also joining the P&A team is Allie Denham, Senior Development Associate. Allie attended the University of Toledo, triple majoring in creative writing, saxophone performance, and development in Sub-Saharan Africa. She has a Masters of Music in Saxophone Performance from Cleveland State University.

David Stokley joins the team as Legacy Giving Officer. Dave received his JD from The Ohio State University and his undergraduate degree from Wittenberg University.

David has served as a Trust Officer at JP Morgan Chase and PNC, as well as practicing estate planning and probate law at Stark and Knoll. He also was the Associate Director of Principal Gifts at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Philanthropy and Advancement Senior Director of Development, Emily Thome, recently shared with the Volunteer Council members several key items that are happening with The Cleveland Orchestra:

- Rebranding the 100th birthday celebration as the “Second Century” (previously “Sounds of Centennial”)
- Offering a free community event as part of “A Second Century Celebration” in March
- Completion of The Cleveland Orchestra’s strategic plan for the next 3 years.

Carolyn Teter
Allie Denham

David Stokley
Emily Thome

2017 Blossom Music Festival schedule to be announced on February 6th, 2017
Concert Calendar:

January 12th and 14th – Bruckner’s Seventh, Franz Welser-Möst, conductor, with guest Yefim Bronfman, piano, Severance Hall. Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets and times.

January 15th – Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Concert, Thomas Wilkins, conductor, 7:00 pm, Severance Hall. Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets.

February 9th, 10th and 11th – Schubert and Mahler, Christoph von Dohnányi, conductor, with Michelle DeYoung, mezzo-soprano and Paul Groves, tenor, Severance Hall. Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets.

February 14th – Breakfast at Tiffany’s, Justin Freer, conductor with Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus, 7:30 pm, Severance Hall. Experience this classic film on the big screen with the original score performed live! Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets.

February 16th, 17th and 18th – Mozart and Tchaikovsky, Semyon Bychkov, conductor with Katia Labèque and Marielle Labèque, piano, Severance Hall. Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets.

February 23rd, 24th and 25th – Debussy’s La Mer, Matthias Pintscher, conductor, with Cédric Tiberghien, piano, Severance Hall. Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets.

Special Events:

January 16th – Martin Luther King Jr. Community Open House, noon to 5:00 pm, Severance Hall. Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets and times.

February 19th – Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra and Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus present Bates, Debussy and Poulenc, 7:00 pm, Severance Hall. Check clevelandorchestra.com for tickets and times.

The Women’s Committee of The Cleveland Orchestra will host a Meet The Artist on Friday, March 3rd. Featuring Dane Johansen, cellist with The Cleveland Orchestra, short performance followed by Conversation with Ilya Gidalevich, Artistic Administrator, The Cleveland Orchestra.

The Cleveland Skating Club, Shaker Heights
11:30 patron reception, 12 noon lunch, $40 WCCO member & $50 non-member
Reservations Contact: Pat Sommer pk4sommer@roadrunner.com