Steinway—Quality Craftsmanship Still Matters

HENRY STEINWAY, born Heinrich Steinweg, built his first piano in his kitchen and went on to fine-tune his craft before immigrating from Germany to the United States. He’d already built 482 pianos before opening Steinway and Sons in 1853, setting up shop in a small loft in Manhattan, but he and his family didn’t settle for same-old-same-old. His company continued to develop its craft and refine its product, claiming more than 100 patents and utilizing new scientific research in acoustics.

The Steinways were just as savvy with marketing their pianos as they were with making them. They positioned themselves at various exhibitions, including the Paris Exhibition in 1867, winning medal after medal and establishing a world-class reputation. They built Steinway Hall, an auditorium that seated 2,000, and required New York Philharmonic concert-goers to enter through a piano showroom in order to reach their seats.

After expanding into a new and larger facility in Queens, they built Steinway Village, a company town with foundries, parks, a post office, church, library and housing for employees—at its peak, the town even had a beer garden and an amusement park. Steinway Village has since been incorporated into Astoria, but the factory remains in its original location, as does the Steinway Reformed Church and the Steinway Library. And some of the original employee houses still exist as private residences.

After more than 150 years, Steinway and Sons still makes its prized pianos in traditional fashion, producing about 2,500 a year; and its reputation is as solid as ever.

The Performing Arts Center is fortunate to have its own Steinway, a concert grand that is coddled and cared for, gingerly stored in a climate-controlled room. Guest pianist Maira Liliestedt will be playing this piano on February 25, performing Franz Liszt’s Piano Concert No. 1 in E-flat. She’ll help us demonstrate that quality craftsmanship still matters.

Dear Tuscafilliates

I call it my “Aspiration Application,” that which is commonly referred to as a “Bucket List”—an inelegant term, coyly referring as it does to that object which we all must one day kick. My “AspirApp” is chock full of titles of compositions I want to study, digest and share in rehearsals and performances. William Schuman’s New England Triptych has been on the list for more than four decades, and the composer’s recent centennial was an excellent occasion to program it. Alas, the Tuscarawas Philharmonic missed the opportunity in all of the hoopla surrounding the 75th anniversary and the new hall, so we’re circling back for it; and for Robert Schumann’s 2010 bicentennial with the beloved Third Symphony, the Rhenish.

Centennials are useful simply as categories to help me limit choices—as I say, my AspirApp is full!

How about yours? As I am in the midst of planning the 2012-13 season, there is an opening for a symphony—yes, specifically a symphony—and I have several still on my list: Beethoven Eroica, Brahms 4 (again), Shostakovich 7, Haydn 88 and 104, Mahler 1 and 4, Tchaikovsky Winter Dreams, Sibelius 2 or 5, Walton 1 (I live to dream...).

Care to vote for one of these or suggest one from your own AspirApp? Email me, and we’ll tally the results on the Tusc Phil Facebook site.
MAIRA LILIESTEDT and her family left their home in Deva, Romania in 1992 to begin new lives in Ohio. Life in middle-America is a far cry from what they knew, but they chose the spot because they had family here. Maira was all of 14 at the time.

It was just a few years earlier when her country experienced a major revolution, ending the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Even as a child, Maira was well aware of the nature of the society in which she lived, and she heard enough cloaked conversation to understand how unhappy people were with Ceaușescu’s regime.

Maira recalls Romania had just one television station, which was government controlled and which kept everyone isolated from news from the outside world, and even from other parts of their own country. She recalls the day protestors took control of that station, when demonstrations took hold in her own city and watching the fall of the regime after merely a week of violent protests.

In anticipation of moving to the States, Maira said she was “ignorant” of the changes ahead. “In parts of Europe, the United States is seen as the land of milk and honey, and it’s idealized,” she said. “I was excited because I thought I was going to paradise.”

She soon realized life in the States is not all “milk and honey” and she would have to make major adjustments and commit to hard work.

Work wasn’t new to Maira, even at a tender age. Deva offered a variety of elementary schools, each with a specific focus, such as gymnastics or math and sciences, and Maira’s mother enrolled her in a music school when she was six years old. The school provided a complete education combined with intense music instruction, and she began studying piano with two hour-long lessons each week. By middle school, Maira would be studying music theory and other intricacies of music that many American students don’t begin learning until much later.

At her new school in Ohio, Maira’s choir teacher recognized her advanced talent right away and helped her connect with a teacher at Bowling Green State University, more than an hour’s drive from home. Maira took weekly lessons there throughout high school, although she confessed she lacked the self-motivation required to excel and considered quitting. “The only reason I didn’t was I couldn’t imagine my life without music and without piano,” she said.

From that moment on, she was all in and committed to dedicated study and practice. She graduated from Bowling Green and continued studies at the University of Cincinnati. And now, Maira shares her love of music as a performer and an educator, instilling in her students an appreciation for the artistry of music and the hard work required to express it.

GLENN MEARS AND DR. RENEE MISKIMMIN and family of New Philadelphia are active supporters of the orchestra. “Combine the Performing Arts Center with the Tuscarawas Philharmonic, and you indeed have a quality-of-life enhancing combination,” said Glenn, owner of Parkway Auto Group. He has two children, Seth and Dylan, who are interested in music—voice, saxophone, steel drums, guitar and piano—and who sang with the children’s chorus for the Yuletide concert. Renee, a family physician working with an insurance company in Pennsylvania, is an avid vocalist (mezzo-soprano) who recently moved to New Philadelphia from Pittsburgh. “I support the Tuscarawas Philharmonic because I believe that music enhances everyone’s life, whether listening or playing,” she said. And she added, “One of the things I enjoy most is Eric Benjamin talking about the piece of music to introduce to the audience something they may not be aware of in the music.”
ON December 10, the Tuscarawas Philharmonic performed its annual Yuletide concert to a sold-out auditorium, packing the house for holiday selections and a performance of Alex Bevan’s *As A Child Looks At Christmas Eve*. The Philharmonic shared the stage with Bevan, along with the Tuscarawas Philharmonic Children’s Chorus, the Greater Tuscarawas Children’s Chorus and the Dover High School Women’s Chorus. A CD of the Bevan work is available for sale at the Philharmonic website.

Here is just a sampling of what people had to say about the unforgettable performance:

“It was beautiful! My daughter was so proud to be part of it! Great job everyone!! Beautiful songs and lyrics by Mr. Bevan!”  
*Leah Shetler*

“We loved every minute of this wonderful program!”  
*Michele Harstine*

“Thank you Alex Bevan and Eric Benjamin for a truly magical experience last night. That is the most fun I have had at a concert in a long time.”  
*Crystal Sabik*

“Any music that raises the soul works for me and they certainly did it!”  
*Carolyn Berry*

(photos by Terry Barnhill—top to bottom) Kyle Snyder in the sound room for the evening’s performance of *As A Child Looks At Christmas Eve*; Katherine Miller of the Dover High School Women’s Chorus performing *The Organ and the Sparrow*; Alex Bevan narrating *As A Child Looks At Christmas Eve*; members of the Children’s Chorus; the orchestra and combined choruses with Alex Bevan.
• Jerry Wong—Unexpected Program Adjustment

Regrettably, Jerry Wong will be unable to perform with the Tuscarawas Philharmonic as planned for our February concert. Circumstances required he unexpectedly decline—he needed to undergo rib resection surgery on January 24th. The procedure was a success, and he is recuperating well at home.

• Preparing for the Annual Auction

The Philharmonic will be conducting its annual online auction, with bidding beginning April 9 and continuing through April 23.

We’ll be offering a wide variety of fun and useful items—from gift certificates to home and garden items to sporting events tickets to travel—and all proceeds will support the Philharmonic Orchestra, Adult Chorus and Children’s Chorus.

Donations of auction items from individuals and businesses are being accepted now and will continue to be added to the catalog up to the last week. Gift certificates are popular—plus, they bring folks into your place of business!

Don’t have an item to offer for bidding? Then, consider becoming a sponsor with levels ranging from $100 and above. Your business will be featured on the website with a link to your own site, creating advertising exposure to a large and proactive audience.

To contribute an item to the auction or to become a sponsor, contact Bud Winn (330-364-1843 or bwinn@roadrunner.com).