

# the Promise of Living

October 7, 2017 • 7:30 PM

## TUSCARAWAS PHILHARMONIC

# The Promise of Living

When we set out to pay tribute to the village of Zoar in its bi-centennial year, one piece of music came to mind over all others, Aaron Copland's "The Promise of Living." The piece for orchestra and chorus is from an opera Copland composed entitled *The Tender Land*, which premiered in 1954.

For his hopeful story, Copland was inspired by the photographs of Walker Evans, whose now iconic images have preserved the ground-level affects of the Great Depression on rural America.

Act 1 opens with Beth dancing alone. The daughter of a midwestern farm family, she is not far from the other characters who begin to tell the story of their day-to-day lives—sewing, farming, gossiping about activities in the community.

As the opera continues, the eldest daughter of the family decides to leave home and to make a new life outside of her familiar confines, to the dismay of her loved ones. Still, they see her off and get back to the tasks that need tending, and the story ends with Beth dancing alone once again.

In "The Promise of Living," the deeply rooted core of this

farm-and-family lifestyle, much more than mere existence, is spelled out through the lyrics of Erik Johns:

The promise of living  
with hope and thanksgiving  
is born of our loving  
our friends and our labor.

• • •

For many a year I've known these fields  
and known all the work that makes  
them yield.

Are you ready to lend a hand?  
We're ready to work, we're ready to lend  
a hand."

And what is the promise of living? Copland's song tells us—"The promise of living is labor and sharing and loving."

This sentiment, this commitment to community and to work, is what we pay tribute to as we consider our neighbors in Zoar and the unique history of their village.

On October 7, the Malone University Chorale, under the direction of Jon Peterson, will "lend a hand" in the effort.

Eric's Summer  
Vacation  
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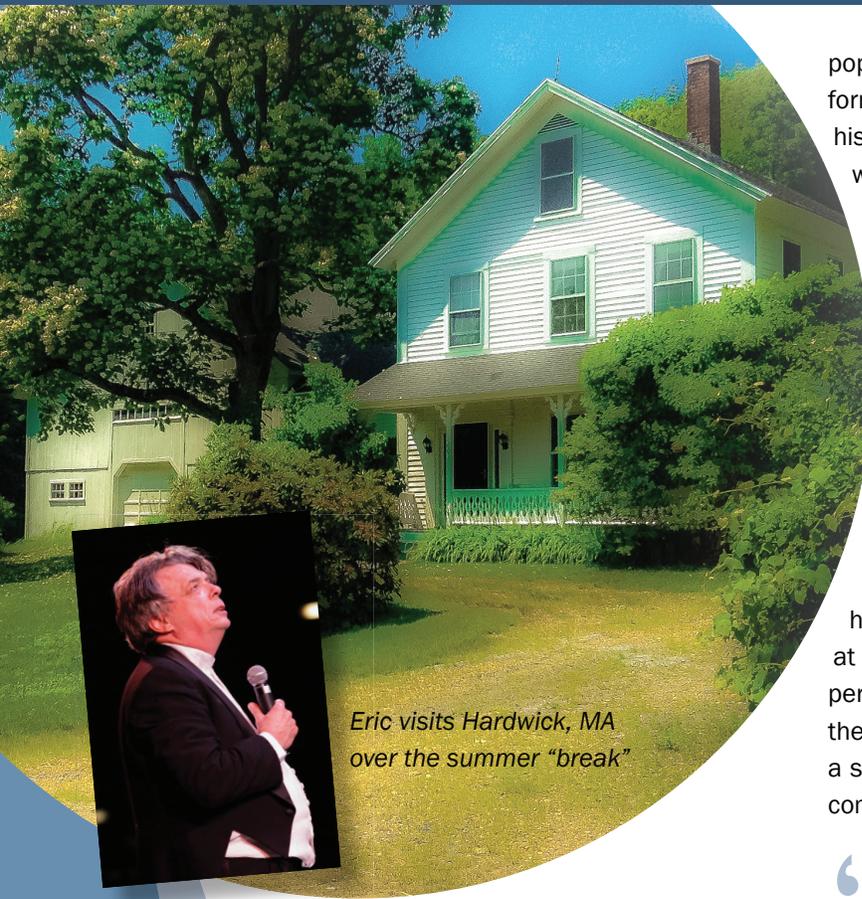
CHORUS  
REHEARSALS  
TO BEGIN!  
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Musician Spotlight  
Cathy Hill, Viola  
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# Eric's Summer Vacation—2017 Edition



*Eric visits Hardwick, MA  
over the summer "break"*

The feeling of exultation I experience at the end of May and the beginning of June is a true Rite of Spring for me—a celebration of renewal and new life that has a bit to do with the cycle of nature, to be sure, but even more so with the change of routine. With the turning in of grades on the campuses, the winding down of the concert season, and the exhilarating but brief camp weeks at the PAC, life takes on a new tempo in a very different daily routine.

I get to focus on marks I make on music paper as I work on composing and arranging projects. Just that. No classes. No rehearsals. Instead, I get to contemplate things that don't exist yet—to dream dreams and think about the possibilities of music that lives only in the most fragmentary, potential form in my mind.

This past summer I reserved to devote to two projects: an original composition for brass choir on commission from Dr. Otis French at the University of Mount Union, and the orchestrations and choral arrangements of "Franc D'Ambrosio's Christmas in New York" for the Tuscarawas Philharmonic.

The latter project is slated for performance in December as the orchestra, the children's chorus, and the adult chorus collaborate with the great Franc D'Ambrosio in what will be the premiere of the orchestral and choral version of his musical memoir. The music for the show consists of just about every

popular Christmas song you can name, and it has been performed in an arrangement for solo piano to accompany Franc in his solo act. The all-important decisions about "what happens when" have all been made, and I have only (only!) to decide who plays those notes at any given time. It's like coloring in a sonic coloring book. For the Philharmonic and choruses, it's an exciting opportunity to perform with a legend. For Franc, it expands a performance vehicle. And for me, it's another chance to make art on paper that comes vividly to life in sound.

The orchestrations are being cooked up in a slow simmer as you read this—it's a lot of music, and summers are not as long as they used to be. Have you noticed?

And then there was the original composition to dream up and notate. What emerged is a set of variations on the hymn tune "Old 100th" for large brass choir that times out at about eight minutes. I'm old school and still love the experience of drawing the shapes of noteheads on the lines of the staff with a number two pencil. Only after I have at least a single line of music in every measure do I then move to the computer and enter the piece into music software.

“I get to contemplate things that don't exist yet—to dream dreams and think about the possibilities of music that lives only in the most fragmentary, potential form in my mind.”

Mostly I worked at my home in Alliance, but as I have done for the past six summers, I traveled to Hardwick, Massachusetts to take up residence at the farmhouse-home of dear friends for a few weeks. There I could enjoy their company and the ambience of rural New England while working on the piece in solitude. I love to get up at dawn, make the coffee, and set to work, surrounded by the silence of the countryside, punctuated only by birdsong.

Oh, "Things Philharmonic" were never far from my mind, rest assured. Hardwick is somewhat off the grid, but Philharmonic staff and I could still make swipes at those busy and elusive clouds of planning details that flutter like moths around the porch light.

The "Old 100th" piece is complete and delivered, I am back in the classroom and on the podium, and of course, still working on the D'Ambrosio Christmas arrangements. Summer, in a form, continues...I don't speak of it in past tense until October 1.

*Edited—for the full article, see the blog on our website*



# CALLING ALL SINGERS!

*It might be too early for Christmas decorations,  
but it's the perfect time to begin preparing for our Christmas concert!*

This year, we welcome back Franc D'Ambrosio for his seasonal memoir "Christmas in New York." Franc's hit performance is being orchestrated—by Eric Benjamin, no less—and will include both adult and children's choruses. If you like to sing, join us for rehearsals beginning October 31. No auditions. No stress. Plenty of joy and wonderful memories of sharing music with your community. Details of locations and times are available on the website.



## Peter and the Wolf

On November 2, the Philharmonic will perform *Peter and the Wolf* as part of the Performing Arts Center's award-winning Class Acts program for local school children. For the special daytime event, we will partner with students from the Kent State Tuscarawas theater department under the direction of William Auld.

If you or your business would like to sponsor the event, contact Executive Director Sallie Stroup at [salliedstroup@gmail.com](mailto:salliedstroup@gmail.com).

## YULETIDE CHILDREN'S CHORUS REHEARSALS TO BEGIN!

Rehearsals for the Yuletide Children's Chorus begin October 14 at the Performing Arts Center (details available on the website)

The chorus is open to all singers ages 7 to 14 with no fees or auditions required. Children will be preparing for the December 9th performance of **Franc D'Ambrosio's Christmas in New York**.

Note: Singers do not need to belong to the year-round Children's Chorus to participate.

To contribute to these and other Philharmonic programs, visit our website for quick and secure online donations— [www.TuscarawasPhilharmonic.org](http://www.TuscarawasPhilharmonic.org)

# Musican Spotlight



## CATHY HILL, PRINCIPAL VIOLA •

I was born in Canton, Ohio and have lived in the Akron/Canton area all of my life. Most violists begin playing on the violin, however I was one of the exceptions and learned to play first on the viola. My mother was influential in this, as she knew I preferred to sing harmony in choir.

It was when I was in fourth grade that Margery Henke took over as the public music instructor. She was the greatest influence in making music an important part of my life and became a second mother to me in many ways. I remember the time she took me water skiing with the Henke family.

I played in Canton Youth Symphony under her direction, and she also encouraged me to audition for the Canton Symphony where I became the youngest player at the age of 15 and received special permission to join the musician's union.

I planned to pursue music as a career and was accepted

at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music but instead followed in my father's footsteps, majored in accounting at the University of Akron, and went on to become a CPA. I'm currently working at Windstream as a financial analyst supporting the engineering department.

I began playing in the Tuscarawas Philharmonic in 1975. I have many wonderful memories of the orchestra and of the many people I have met and become friends with over the years. In addition to the Philharmonic, I have played violin and viola with the Alliance Symphony and with various string quartets.

The music I enjoy playing and listening to most are those that invoke a visual image. I have enjoyed playing *Pictures at an Exhibition* and *Appalachian Spring*; and my favorite is *Frostiana* by Randall Thomas, which is played with a choir singing the poetry of Robert Frost.

My husband, Larry, and I own a post-and-beam home we built together on 17 acres in Marlboro township near Alliance Ohio. A short walk from our back door is an eagle's nest on Walborn Reservoir. We have seen many fledglings of eaglets born and raised there.

[ Read Cathy's full story on the blog on our website ]



## FRANC D'AMBROSIO'S CHRISTMAS IN NEW YORK

DECEMBER 9, 2017 • 7:30 P.M.

*Featuring the Children's Chorus  
and the Adult Chorus  
singing holiday classics.*



In an exclusive premiere production, we welcome back Broadway legend Franc D'Ambrosio to perform his musical memoir, "Christmas in New York." With stories and music, Franc takes us on a tour of New York City at Christmas time.

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- [www.TuscarawasPhilharmonic.org](http://www.TuscarawasPhilharmonic.org) • *State of the Art* editor: Robyn Martins
- Performing at the Kent State Tuscarawas Performing Arts Center • Box Office—330.308.6400