

NOTEWORTHY

VOLUNTEER COUNCIL FOR THE NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
NOVEMBER 2023

SPECTACULAR SPOOKTACULAR

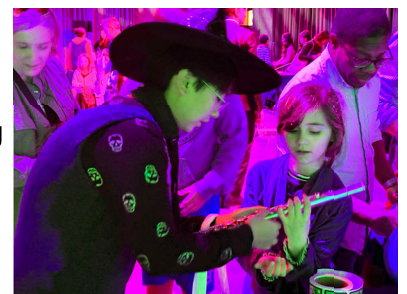
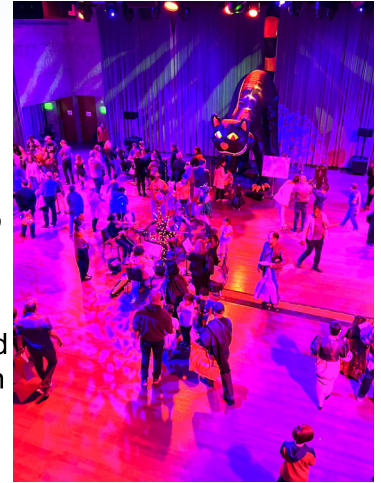
Maggie Stehman

The Spooktacular has returned in spectacular form, truly a Spectacular Spooktacular! This long-standing production of the VCNSO and the NSO Education Department is back in all its colorful, noisy crowd-pleasing chaos. Among the characters crowding into the REACH were Spider-Man and Antman, witches, a young lady riding her green dinosaur, Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe ready to party, pumpkins, an engineer wearing his train, "Frozen" Princesses and even today's most famous person - Taylor Swift!

Nearly 2,000 attendees, possibly the largest crowd ever, had their faces painted and arms tattooed, had photos taken in the Photo Booth and more, all thanks to Carmen Stull's artistic team in the Macaroni room. Across the hall in Studio K, the Haunted Hall was sound central. Once again, our huge inflatable Black Cat with his toothy grin presided over the fun! VCNSO Volunteers and DCYOP music students demonstrated instruments to the smiles of the kids and delight of parents. For the first time, there was a quartet playing intermittently to everyone's enjoyment. A scavenger hunt to identify specific instruments was a highlight, judging by the number of maps that were stamped by our volunteers. Though Halloween is about tricks and treats, for the Spooktacular, it's treats only and we had those aplenty - stickers, spider rings, finger puppets, colorful fangs and, after leaving the Haunted Hall - Candy.

The return of the Spooktacular/Haunted Hall was as spectacular as ever. The VCNSO Volunteers were exhilarated and exhausted at afternoon's end. We'd love you to join us and be part of the fun for next year's Spooktacular and/or one of the other Musical Playspaces before NSO Family Concerts.

An event as grand as this doesn't happen by magic, though there is some of that. So, huge thanks go to Dulce Obias-Manno and her team for planning and executing this successful event, to Jane White, our President, and Emily Heckel and her NSO Education staff and the DCYOP music students and, of course, the VCNSO Volunteers. Special thanks to Virginia Mars, a longtime VCNSO Member, and Mars, Incorporated for their contribution of a variety of candy.



THE 2023 SPOOKTACULAR – GRUELING BUT REWARDING!

Ron Stehman

At 12:30 PM, on Sunday October 22, the NSO/Kennedy Center “Spooktacular” opened with the aid of the NSO Volunteer Council members. It flooded approximately 2,000 children and parents in what seemed like a “tidal wave” anxious to enjoy a brief encounter with the Volunteer Council’s musical instruments. An opportunity to test out their skill with stringed and percussion instruments and to touch and hold wind and brass instruments. Each child moved from one table of instruments to the next, enjoying an instrument, getting a small prize to take home, and getting their ballot for the various instruments stamped. Yes, it was a “mad house” with each child wanting to hold and attempt to play an instrument. At my table, percussion/drums, the one instrument that each child seemed puzzled over how to “play it” and what it was for was “the vibraslap”, an instrument that had to be held a certain way and hit on the palm of one’s hand. I spent most of my time demonstrating it. Each time I showed them how to handle it and upon hitting it against my palm, I saw their eyes light up and become anxious to try it – the rewarding part! I’m sure my fellow volunteers had the same experience with one or more instruments on their table. With the flood of children, it was grueling, but with the smiles, it was rewarding! The costumes were great with some being really imaginative. And, I would guess that perhaps 25% of the parents came in costume adding to their fun. Taking many pictures and videos of their child with an instrument further added to the parents’ enjoyment.

At 2 PM, they all left to attend a concert, giving us a breather till 2:30 PM when the floodgates opened again. But this time to merely a flood of children and parents in place of a tidal wave! At 4:00 PM it was over – except for the smile on my face.



FROM THE VCNSO PRESIDENT

Jane M. White
November 2023



As this festive season approaches, we should take the time out of our much too busy schedules to reflect on how fortunate we really are. There are times in each of our lives when we honestly believe that nothing is right. However, with more in depth reflection — we find that there are many people, things and situations for which we are truly thankful.

One of the things for which I am very thankful is this building, the Kennedy Center. It is not merely stone, wood and glass, rather it is the body of people who work, learn and teach in it and who fill its halls every day. You are this building wherever you fit. You will always be part of the memories. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this year, we should be thankful for the wonderful opportunities we have enjoyed by volunteering at the “Cultural Monument” for our nation, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

So, you might ask what exactly does the Volunteer Council for the National Symphony Orchestra do? As we look at the “big picture”, the organization offers each member personal growth, education, strength and support in all your endeavors. We must also remember that each of you is an agent of change. We thank you for all you do – your time, effort, ideas and dedication as you support the NSO. Each of you is stronger than you realize. Together you are a powerhouse of knowledge and strength. Let’s work together to keep this organization alive, active and inspiring.

As my term as president is coming to a close, I am pleased to present to you the following slate of candidates for your consideration and say thank you to all the members who are willing to give their time, energy and enthusiasm to fulfill the mission of the VC/NSO.

Nominations for Leadership for VC/NSO :

President elect: Carol Ruppel
Treasurer: Bob Warakomsky
Recording Secretary: Susan Cheatham
Membership V.P. Ginni Gorman
Communication: Judy Canyock

Our next general meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 13 at 10:00 A.M. via Zoom. We will vote on the proposed slate of officers. Please make every effort to attend this meeting.



Thank you, Jane, for your dedication and plain hard work.

Special thanks also to Diana Phillips and Dulce Obais-Manno for their photography that graces all of our publications.



FALL 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

Carol Ruppel

Our annual fall luncheon meeting on October 11 was a lovely event that took place in Alexandria at the Montebello Grille. Joyce Grimes and her committee put it all together. After a social hour, Joyce gathered us to our seats for lunch.

President Jane White convened the meeting, introducing Emily Heckel, NSO Education Department manager of programming and production whom she surprised with Diana Phillips' beautifully jazzy piano rendition of "Happy Birthday." Emily needed no introduction, as she has worked with the Volunteer Council for many years. In her keynote speech she listed our collaborations and their value to the NSO.

Heckel then introduced the two young musicians, cellist Lourdes de las Peña, and pianist Yechan Lim. Together they performed two pieces flawlessly. De la Peña had been an NSO Youth Fellow for three years; a Summer Music Institute participant for two, and a member of the American Youth Philharmonic Orchestra. She's founder and director of String Time, a music-oriented summer camp for seven-12-year-olds (stringtimemusic.org). She studied under NSO cellist Rachel Young, and now studies under NSO Principal Cellist David Hardy. Lim was a member of the American Youth Philharmonic Orchestra coached by NSO Assistant Concertmaster Ricardo Cyncynades. You must see his performances on YouTube. And if you don't know the American Youth Orchestra Symphony programs, please visit the website. Under the program, more than 500 of the metro area's most talented young musicians train in seven orchestras and seven ensembles.

Jane then conducted the business meeting. She introduced the Volunteer Council committee chairs, describing their work, and congratulated them for jobs well done. She then opened the discussion addressing the VC's future. With our dwindling numbers we've had trouble recruiting enough members to volunteer for our various functions and keep us going. Jane reported that the Board poses three options for our continuation, or discontinuation. The first is to fold; the second, to attempt to go on as usual, despite the obstacles, and the third, to reconfigure our VC to attempt to attract new members and run a more streamlined organization. A short discussion ensued and there appeared to be a general consensus that we follow the third option. Jane reported that efforts are underway to streamline the VC, that bylaw changes and votes will be forthcoming. Please stay tuned.



OUR HISTORY

Carol Ruppel, adapted from *Sixty Years of Service, 1941-2001*

Having gathered for lunch at a downtown Washington hotel, a group of NSO supporters agreed to form The Women's Committee. That was in 1941, ten years after the founding of the NSO. Orchestra Manager J. Patrick Hayes planted the seed with the Orchestra's cofounder, Mary Howe, noting that the NSO was the only major American orchestra without a women's committee. Howe was a professional pianist and composer who performed her own and others' compositions with the NSO and around the world. (Her husband Walter Bruce Howe was the other NSO cofounder.)

At that initial meeting the group adopted articles of incorporation, named subcommittee chairwomen and soon won the NSO Board of Directors' approval. Dues were one dollar; membership criterion: a willingness to work for the Orchestra.

For years the support consisted of selling NSO subscription tickets, help with mailing, telephoning for continued subscriptions, and processing ticket orders. In addition, the Committee raised significant funds for the Orchestra. It organized, expanded and publicized the children's concert program, participated in an annual fund drive and arranged pre- or post-concert receptions for visiting artists. Members also gave talks on music history.

In our early days most members lived in DC, but post-war suburban expansion led to the creation of suburban chapters, thus helping the Orchestra and the Women's Committee offer activities and support throughout the metropolitan area. (The NSO used to perform both at Constitution Hall and in the Washington suburbs, before the Kennedy Center opened in 1971.)

In the 1950s many Women's Committee tasks were assumed by an expanded administrative staff, so the committee began to look for other ways to support the Orchestra. Members actually sold symphony tickets door-to-door, by phone, letter and at stores' box offices. Some members were groomed as speakers to attend other organizations' meetings, give weekly talks on music history to foreign dignitaries for the State Department and make appearances on radio and television on behalf of the NSO. In fact, in 1952 WTOP-TV awarded the Committee "best show on public service time."

Starting in the 1960s the Women's Committee was asked to concentrate on fundraising, to lessen the Orchestra's chronic operating deficits. We sponsored all kinds of projects to raise money. We organized Insider Tours for groups visiting DC, ran an annual fundraising campaign and held fashion shows. Our most successful fundraisers were the NSO Decorators' Show Houses. For 34 years the Show Houses were a Washington tradition and earned nearly \$7.9 million for the orchestra. They heightened community awareness of the NSO and energized the Women's Committee.

The Orchestra always encouraged contributions by offering endowment opportunities, and in the 1970s the Women's Committee committed some its earnings, adding member donations, to endowing the sixth week of concerts each year. We also endowed both a guest conductor for each year's subscription concert and the principal oboe chair. Our membership reached 1,573 by 1976.

In 1989 the Women's Committee committed \$1 million dollars to an unspecified endowment for the NSO after fulfilling its earlier pledges. However, the Orchestra's immediate financial needs intervened, and in 1991 then-NSO executive director asked that we suspend funding our endowment and instead contribute to the Orchestra's operations. Although we'd reached more than half of our endowment goal, the WC Board reluctantly decided that future contributions would be made to operations. With relatively small amounts still directed to the endowment over the years, we accumulated approximately a million dollars, invested by the Kennedy Center and reevaluated annually.

In 2008, we were asked to leave most fundraising to staff members and to focus more fully on music education. **Family Concerts**, now supported by our Annual Campaign, were among our first projects.

Over the years many VIPs have addressed us, including President Truman and Vice President Nixon. First Ladies Patricia Nixon, Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter honored us with White House receptions. And we have regularly feted orchestra VIPs--NSO music directors, visiting conductors and artists.

In 2011 the Women's Committee voted to admit men to membership. In 2017 we voted to eliminate the chapters and soon changed our name to Volunteer Council of the NSO. Today we continue activities smaller in scope but much appreciated by the musicians, staff and our members. Our president represents us as an ex-officio member of the NSO Board.

**WORDS OF WISDOM
FROM MICHAEL ANDOR BRODEUR**

Carol Ruppel, Editor



It's hard to appreciate critics, and often I don't. But it's impossible not to like Michael Andor Brodeur, *The Washington Post's* music critic, who is so good at finding bright spots and fine points. His September 24 review, like all his reviews, provides a quick lesson on how to listen. That one is about Conductor Stéphane Denève's direction of the New World Symphony--not Dvorak's composition, but the Miami-based orchestra, whose artistic director before Denève was Michael Tilson Thomas, also its founder.

Maestro Denève tells the orchestra that "preparation is key," which, Brodeur writes, "In the context of the movement, he is urging them to mentally queue not just the next note, but its shape, its color, its character, to summon all of these things in the moment before the note arrives so its sound can be released like a bird." Yes, we thought it meant they should practice more at home!

The New World Symphony orchestra and academy, NWS, offers a very select number of recent music school and conservatory graduates a three-year fellowship to continue their studies, learn the business, play music and create. According to Brodeur, 11 members of the NSO are NWS alumni. He lists Kathryn Meany Wilson, English horn; Adriana Horne, principal harp; and Derek Powell, second violin, along with former Executive Director Gary Ginstling, clarinet. NSO Jae Yeon Kim, Peiming Lin and Benjamin Scott, all second violins; Samuel Blair, contra-bassoon; Robert Reardon, horn; Stephen Dumane, principal tuba and Jauvon Gilliam, principal timpani are also alums. The fellows program sounds very much like the NSO's Summer Music Institute, but for musicians further along in their development.

Brodeur reviewed NSO's opening gala concert on September 25, critiquing its performance of a Rossini overture, "Noseda drew electric energy and witty precision from its busy stretches of strings...." According to Brodeur, Kennedy Center's Resident Composer Carlos Simon's *Fate Now Conquers* is a "harmonically rich response to [the second movement of] Beethoven's Seventh Symphony." "Busy undercurrents of strings built to tempestuous peaks, long girders of brass offered structural support and Simon's facility with complex rhythms reaffirmed itself as one of his signature strengths." His history of *Pictures at an Exhibition* over various composers, and his critique of the performance is enlightening and exuberant. [The digital program notes on the NSO website by Thomas May on *Pictures* are also worth reading.] Critic that he is, Brodeur is clearly taken with the NSO and lets us know of its excellence, particularly of every solo-playing member.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2023

2	Thursday	10:30 AM	Youth Fellowship Rehearsal
2	Thursday	7:00 PM	Gustavo Gimeno Conducts
3	Friday	9:00 AM 11:30 AM	Sound Health Greeting. THE REACH COFFEE CONCERT Concert Hall
4	Saturday	10:00 AM 11:30 AM 1:00 PM	NSO Music for Young Audiences: Peter and Friends
4	Saturday	8:00 PM	Gustavo Gimeno Conducts
5	Saturday	1:00 PM 2:30 PM 4:00 PM	NSO Music for Young Audiences: Peter and Friends
6	Monday	10:30 AM 12:00 PM	NSO Music for Young Audiences: Peter and Friends (School Program)
8	Wednesday		VCNSO Board Meeting
9	Thursday	7:00 PM	Yuja Wang Plays Bartok
11	Saturday	8:00 PM	Tarmo Peltokoski Conducts Sibelius
12	Sunday	3:00 PM	
16	Thursday	7:00 PM	Michael Tilson Thomas Returns
18	Saturday	8:00 PM	
17	Friday		Wine Tasting
24	Friday	8:00 PM	POPS Christmas Symphony Tour 2023
25	Saturday	2:00 PM 8:00 PM	Celtic Woman
30	Thursday	10:30 AM	Youth Fellowship Rehearsal
30	Friday	7:00 PM	Bronfman plays Brahms
	Saturday	8:00 PM	Dima Slobodeniouk Conducts

DECEMBER

1	Friday	7:00 PM	Bronfman plays Brahms
3	Saturday	8:00 PM	Dima Slobodeniouk Conducts
13	Wednesday		VCNSO Board Meeting
8	Friday	8:00 PM	A Holiday Pops! with Norm Lewis
9	Saturday	2:00 PM 8:00 PM	Steven Reineke, Principal Pops Conductor
10	Sunday	3:00 PM	Thomas Pandolfi Concert
14	Thursday	7:00 PM	Handel's Messiah
15	Friday	8:00 PM	Laurence Equilbey, Conductor
16	Saturday	8:00 PM	
17	Sunday	1:00 PM	



National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center

Gianandrea Noseda
Music Director

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER COUNCIL

The Volunteer Council for the National Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1941 to provide educational and financial support to the orchestra and offer a networking group to men and women with an interest in symphonic music. Membership is open to anyone who shares a love of music, music education, and an interest in the National Symphony Orchestra.

The Volunteer Council for the National Symphony Orchestra
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
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