

HISTORY OF THE MONMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PRELUDE

In 1937, Beaumont Glass, former violinist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, gathered outstanding musicians from Monmouth and Ocean Counties to create the Spring Lake Sinfonietta. The first performance of the Sinfonietta was given on January 5, 1938. As reported in the Spring Lake Gazette on January 6, 1938:

A large audience of music lovers from all along the shore heard and generously applauded the opening concert of the Spring Lake Sinfonietta in the Spring Lake Community House Wednesday night. The orchestra, directed by Beaumont Glass, himself an accomplished violinist, is composed of well-known shore artists, and is the first organization of its kind sponsored in Spring Lake.

The first Spring Lake Sinfonietta included **Violins**, Arthur Parker, concert master, Max Kayne, Donato Annese, Marguerite Douglas, Aaron DeKoskey, Dorothy Devany, Lillian Sture, Earl Pyle, Anna Sherman, Arch. Erving, Gladys Cree, Elsie Windsor, Anna Koehler, Paul Elisha, Edward Ehre. **Violas**, John Wagneister, Leon Reussille, K. Stewart, Eleanor Schelleng, Louis Miraglia. **Cellos**, Charles Pier, William Golz, Marion Williams, John Schelleng. **Bass**, Randolph Ross. **Piano**, Pauline Ping.

The Sinfonietta formed as an outgrowth of the Spring Lake String Quartet which was organized in 1932 by Mr. Glass. Prior to organizing the String Quartet, Mr. Glass was a member of the New Jersey Philharmonic Orchestra founded by Henry M. Phoenix, violinist and instructor of music, in Manasquan High School. When that orchestra dissolved in 1935, Mr. Glass began assembling players to form the Spring Lake Sinfonietta.

In addition to Mr. Glass, other members of the String Quartet included violinist Arthur Parker, who was a manager of the Ocean Grove Green House and music teacher; violist Louis Miraglia was a lathe operator in an airplane factory. Previously he was the solo violist with the National Orchestral Association in New York City for four years. His father, Prof. Rosario Miraglia operated a music school in Asbury Park. Cellist John Schelleng was a radio research engineer in charge of the Bell Telephone radio transmitting laboratory in West Deal.

The Sinfonietta endured a four-year hiatus due to World War II. Their first concert back after the war was held on March 25, 1946. According to an article in the Asbury Park Press (Evening News) on March 26, 1946:

The Sinfonietta again lists among its membership most of the players who were with it before the war, with just enough new faces to bring it to its normal strength of 36 players.

According to various newspaper accounts, except for the four-year hiatus, the Sinfonietta played continuously until the end of the 1946-47 season. During this time, the Sinfonietta gave performances in Red Bank, Rumson, Toms River, Asbury Park and Ocean Grove and for the benefit of Fitkin Hospital in Red Bank.

At the end of the 1946-47 season, illness forced Mr. Glass into retirement. He was replaced by E. Paul Gierach, Director of Music for the Freehold Public Schools. Mr. Gierach was bandmaster of the 71st Infantry division Band in the American Theatre during the war.

IN THE BEGINNING.....

The first performance of the Spring Lake Sinfonietta under Mr. Gierach took place on December 1, 1948, at Long Branch High School. This marked the beginning of what we now know as the Monmouth Symphony. The program featured Mendelssohn's Overture from "Fingal's Cave", and Beethoven Symphony No.1. Following intermission, Ronald Clark, Baritone Soloist sang four pieces, two of which were accompanied by Francis Kodama on piano. The program concluded with Bizet's L'Arlesienne Suite No.1, and Brahms's Hungarian Dance, No.5

Mr. Gierach held the position as Conductor until the end of the 1948-49 season when he resigned due to his taking a new position as Instrumental Music Instructor for the Morristown Schools. At the same time, the Sinfonietta lost their rehearsal room at the Spring Lake Women's Club. The executive committee was faced with solving these two important problems, which were vital to the life of the organization. A meeting was held on August 24, 1949, where Louis Miraglia was named Conductor, and the name was changed to the **MONMOUTH LITTLE SYMPHONY**. In addition, the orchestra had long sought a larger field of operation and recognition, which the Asbury Park area would provide. A letter was sent to the Ocean Township Board of Education requesting the use of the Wanamassa School auditorium for rehearsals and concerts. This was granted with Monday nights assigned for rehearsals. The 1949-50 series of concerts was planned, and were held on Tuesday nights, November 15, 1949, January 10, 1950, February 28, and April 18.

Louis Miraglia was the logical choice to lead the newly named orchestra, having been a member of the Spring Lake String Quartet and Sinfonietta from their inception. After graduating from Asbury Park High School, he was awarded a scholarship to Juilliard and was a member of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra under Walter Damrosch for six years.

The newly formed Little Monmouth Symphony began with 40 members. As listed in the Asbury Park Press on Sunday August 28, 1949, members included:

Violins, Arthur Parker, Max Kayne, John Pfanstiel, Donato Anese, Earl Pyle, Oliver Applegate, Herman Scheer, Michael Goldwasser, Elsie Winsor, Edward Winsor, Edward Stetter, Archie Erving, Edward Smith, Muriel Wallace, Flora Rengel. **Violas**, Louis Miraglia, Bernard Eidam, Eleanor Schelleng, Charles Taylor, Gladys Cree. **Cellos**, Charles Pier, John Schelleng,

Alice Keating, W.J. Gunther. **Basses**, Edward Jones, Wilbur Eittreim. **Flutes**, Paul Whittaker, Jay Jones. **Oboe**, Frederick Smith. **Clarinets**, Robert Honeywell, Bernard Ungar, Nancy Van Note. **Bassoon**, Norman Van Walkrop. **Horns**, Charles Jackson, Henrietta Runyon. **Trumpets**, Alan Kleingauf, Robert Andrews. **Trombones**, George Gronde, David Emmons. **Tympani**, Joseph Clouser. **Drums**, William Cadigan.

At the beginning of its second season. The Monmouth Little Symphony published a pamphlet that described its work and objectives. "The Monmouth Little Symphony plays standard symphony music, old and new. Most people call such music 'classical.' That means it is exciting, challenging, interesting, and always fresh and vigorous. For those who need to hear live music, the Monmouth Little Symphony offers the opportunity without the penalty of a difficult night trip to New York City. For those who want to learn to love good music, the Monmouth Little Symphony offers a rich start towards opening a new enjoyment of Life. "Understanding music is simply a matter of hearing it." The symphony revealed that its budget last year was \$1000 and set \$2,500 as the objective for the coming season. Money is needed to pay soloists for each concert, to purchase music (some pieces cost upwards to \$35!), and to pay for facility rentals.

To increase ticket sales, the pamphlet outlined *Associate membership in the Symphony is being offered at \$10 for the season, which entitles the subscriber to two tickets for all four 1950-1951 concerts plus a "bonus" of an extra pair, totaling ten individual tickets. Patrons pay \$25 and receive the same number of tickets.*

In order to continue to grow the reach of the orchestra, the 1950-51 season was held at Asbury Park High School. To accommodate musicians and soloists coming from New York and Philadelphia, concerts were held on Tuesday evenings beginning at 8:30pm.

The Monmouth Little Symphony continued to grow through the 1950s, performing an increasingly difficult repertoire and bringing distinguished soloists to Monmouth County. On December 26, 1958, the Orchestra performed at Carnegie Hall in a benefit concert for the Chinese Christian Home for the Aged. The orchestra was invited to participate in this benefit by noted composer D'Artega.

LITTLE NO LONGER....

After the first concert of the 1958-59 season, W.A. Prouty, Press Staff Writer for the Asbury Park Press, wrote: *Last night it really earned the right to drop the word "Little" from its title.* The orchestra took his advice and officially changed its name to THE MONMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA for the 1959-60 season.

SEEKING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

As the orchestra grew in stature, it also faced increased financial difficulties.

The orchestra was under contract with Columbia Artist, which supplied the Guest Soloists for each of the four concerts each season. In addition, other musicians had to be hired to augment the orchestra, music had to be purchased and fees for the use of schools for concerts and rehearsals had to be available.

As reported in the Asbury Park Press, a meeting of the Board of Directors and music lovers was held on May 7, 1963 to plan a fund drive to keep the orchestra from disbanding. Mayor Thomas F. Shebell of Asbury Park pledged the support of the Asbury Park administration in the drive. *"This orchestra must not be allowed to disband. It behooves every lover of fine music to give our area a cultural growth to match the tremendous population growth. We must have something to offer our new residents. We must keep this orchestra in Asbury Park."* The orchestra had to raise \$7,000 to save the 1962-63 season. Subscriptions for the concert season were \$7.00. Becoming a SPONSOR would cost \$25.00 and a PATRON would cost \$50.00. Sponsors and Patrons would receive 4 tickets for each concert. Individual concert tickets were \$1.50 for adults and \$.75 for students. Mr. Goldwasser announced that Thomas Hall, a 16-year-old Ocean Grove musician and student at Neptune High School, stirred by the financial plight of the orchestra, will give a concert in the Ocean Grove Young People's Temple June 15 with the entire proceeds donated to the orchestra. The concert also featured Pianist William A. Reid, Director of Music at St. Paul's Methodist Church and Music Teacher at Middletown School, and Violist, Dave Shotwell, Music Teacher at Central Regional High School, and member of the orchestra. The results of these fund-raising efforts made it possible for the orchestra to continue.

Robert Kestle, an electronics salesman from Ocean Township, took over as President of the orchestra's subscription auxiliary in 1964 from Michael Goldwasser so Mr. Goldwasser could devote more time to being President of the Board of Directors.

According to an interview by Barry Robinson with Mr. Kestle in the Asbury Park Press on November 13, 1964, Mr. Kestle said:

In previous years, a subscriber would open his morning mail one day and find a pair of series tickets along with a note, which told him the tickets were being sent to him so he wouldn't forget to renew his subscription and miss the first concert. A few weeks later, if he hadn't sent his check in for the tickets, he would receive a second note asking him if he had received his tickets because his check hadn't come in yet. The usual result was that 85 per cent of the people solicited in this manner came through.

Mr. Robinson reported that Mr. Kestle took a more conventional approach, sending out letters and brochures and waiting for responses before sending out tickets. What happened was that the orchestra's subscribers, spoiled a bit, perhaps, by Mr. Goldwasser's spoon-feeding them, failed to respond. Faced with this crisis, the auxiliary met Tuesday night and decided to go back to the old method. The letters that will accompany the tickets are being printed now and should be mailed out, along with the tickets, in the next few days in the hope that the symphony can still be saved. The original 1,200 letters went to doctors, lawyers and other professionals, whose names Mr. Kestle got from the telephone directory. He has since learned that, as a group, his

choices are not terribly culture prone, and is now soliciting people who have already expressed by their actions an interest in the arts.

A CHANGE AT THE TOP

Louis Miraglia retired from the orchestra on March 4, 1965, after 15 years as conductor.

The new Conductor, **Gilman Collier**, was introduced at a testimonial dinner for Mr. Miraglia on April 25, 1965. Mr. Collier graduated from the Harvard School of Music. He studied conducting with Leonard Bernstein and Pierre Monteux. He was a member of the music department of the New School for Social Research and a member of the faculty at the Westchester School of Music, White Plains, N.Y. He had been chairman of the Chamber Music Society of the Monmouth Arts Foundation. Mr. Collier first appeared with the orchestra when he was a Guest Conductor in 1964, substituting for Mr. Miraglia when he was on a family trip to India.

THE LEAGUE IS FORMED

One of the top priorities of Mr. Collier was the formation of the Monmouth Symphony League, a women's Auxiliary designed to provide financial and cultural support for the Orchestra. The League was formed at a meeting at Mr. Collier's home on October 11, 1965. As reported in the Asbury Park Press on October 12,

Mrs. Nathan Witkind, Deal, immediate past president of the Monmouth Opera Guild, was temporary chairman. Others who spoke were Mr. Collier, Michael H. Goldwasser, President of the Orchestra, and Robert C. Kestle, President of Friends of the Monmouth Symphony Orchestra, the subscription drive branch. The gathering voted to hold meetings at 1 p.m. on the first Monday of each month and to set membership dues at \$3 annually. The next meeting will be Nov. 1 in Mr. Collier's studio, when it is planned to elect officers, adopt a constitution and bylaws and enroll charter members. Mr. Collier and Mr. Goldwasser outlined the needs of the orchestra and plans for making it effective in providing cultural entertainment. Mr. Collier pictured expanded plans for the orchestra to include more children's concerts; the giving of concerts in other sections of the county and the ability of the orchestra to play more varied and finer concerts through the financial and other organized support which the league could give. He saw one of the functions in which it could help by acting as hostesses at concerts. Mr. Kestle recalled how in 1963 the orchestra faced disbanding for lack of financial support and how Shore music lovers responded to the drive in 1964 which enabled the orchestra to finish that year "in the black." Mrs. Witkind announced that at the league meetings preceding concerts Mr. Collier will present lectures on the music to be played.

The newly formed League held its first election and installation of officers on December 6, 1965. The first officers included George Chertoff of Monmouth Beach, President; Mrs. Daniel Elders of West Long Branch, Mrs. Bernard Wargotz of Middletown, and Mrs. Jack Spergel of West

Long Branch, Vice Presidents; Mrs. Watson Lawrence of Interlaken, Recording Secretary; Mrs. David Marnier of Interlaken, Corresponding Secretary; and Mrs. Harry Roman of Shrewsbury, Treasurer.

Within the first year, the League increased their membership from 30 to 82 active members and had raised over \$700 to support the Orchestra. The first major fund-raising event was the Symphony Ball and Buffet Dinner, attended by 175 patrons and guests at the Molly Pitcher Inn on November 6, 1966. Featured at the Ball were Susanne Shapiro, Harpsichordist, and Margaret Strum, Flautist from New York.

In 1970, the League began creating an Ad Book for each concert season -this became the major fund-raising activity for the year. In addition to Ad Book, the League held numerous fundraisers each year, including trips to Tanglewood, Luncheons Musicales, "Celestial Ball" Luncheon Cruises, Holiday programs and Fashion Shows. Each of the events featured musical performances, many of them by members of the Orchestra.

The League thrived through the next 49 years, generating well over \$250,000 in support of the Orchestra. Membership numbers were as high as 150 during the 1980s and 1990s. As interest and participation waned into the 2010s, the League decided to disband at the end of the 2013-14 season with a final check for \$7000 given to the Orchestra. During the life of the League, the following women held the Presidency: Pearl Chertoff, Beverly Witkind, Margaret Wuorio, Bea Conford, Ofelia Zimmer, Doris Chase, Sylvia Bossen, Mary Broadbent Weidner, Ruth Lione, Kate Wellauer, and Joan Berzansky

THE END OF AN ERA

In 1953, Michael H. Goldwasser, a violinist in the Orchestra and electronics engineer at Ft. Monmouth, accepted the Presidency of the Orchestra. The position included managing the affairs of the Orchestra and directing the annual fund-raising campaign. As the Orchestra began, its annual budget was around \$2500. With each of the four concerts each season featuring a soloist and the need to hire musicians to augment the Orchestra, the budget grew each year. By the time Mr. Goldwasser retired in 1970, the annual budget grew to over \$10,000. By 1964, the dual positions became too much for one man, so Mr. Goldwasser gave up the fund raising and subscription duties to Robert Kestle so he could concentrate on the growing Orchestra itself. His duties included booking concerts, securing venues for rehearsals and concerts, hiring guest artists, "*all of the administrative dirty work no one else would do*" stated Concertmaster Earl Widener. Upon his retirement from Ft. Monmouth in 1972, Mr. Goldwasser had a second career teaching Science in the Freehold Regional High School District until 1986 when illness forced his retirement. Today, the Orchestra honors his years of dedication with the Michael H. Goldwasser Scholarship.

On October 25, 1970, a joint dinner was held with the Monmouth Symphony League and Board of Directors, naming Mr. Goldwasser as President Emeritus and appointing Clinton C. Crocker as the President of the Board. Mr. Crocker was the Dean of Cultural Affairs at Brookdale Community College. Mr. Crocker became the first non-orchestra member to hold the Presidency. It was also announced that the Orchestra would move the concert site from Asbury Park HS to Ocean Township HS. In addition to President Crocker, officers included Arthur Brower, Robert Kestle, Melvin J. Kohn, Eugene Landy, and Mrs. Abram H. Linky, Vice Presidents; Harry Roman, Treasurer; Ronald Barrett, Corresponding Secretary; and Mrs. Alex Koharski, Recording Secretary. The Board included another 21 members.

With the appointment of Mr. Crocker, the Daily Register reported on November 23, 1970 that, for the 1970-71 season, there would be a co-sponsorship with Brookdale Community College. In addition, concerts would not be held in the auditorium at Ocean Township High School where *the acoustics are believed to be particularly suited to the 80-member Organization*. The article also highlighted the violin soloist for the first concert, Concertmaster Emmanuel Senerchia, who previously played professional baseball for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

NEW DIRECTOR -NEW DIRECTION

In 1975, Joseph Szostak, head of the Music Department at Brookdale Community College was appointed the new Music Director. Mr. Collier retired from his position in June of 1972. Mr. Miraglia was appointed to fill the position until his retirement in 1975, at which time Mr. Szostak was appointed. Mr. Szostak has a degree in music education from Wilkes College and an M.A. from Trenton State College. Prior to his appointment at Brookdale, he was an instrumental music teacher at Ocean Township High School

In addition, two new Associate Conductors were named. John Carr, who was named an Associate Conductor in 1973, was re-engaged at this time. Mr. Carr graduated from the University of Kentucky, specializing in instrumental music. During his military service he became a warrant officer and was assigned to Ft. Monmouth to direct the 389th Army Band. He had done graduate work at Temple University. In addition to his work with our orchestra he is choir director of the Ft. Monmouth Post Chapel and conductor of the Monmouth County Wind Ensemble. The second Associate Conductor was Norman Phillip Hart. Noted as a composer, his compositions had been performed by various churches, wind ensembles and orchestras. His conducting experiences included church choirs, musical theatre, and various instrumental ensembles.

The first concert of the 1975-76 season had to be moved from Ocean Township HS to the Monmouth Arts Center, (formerly the Carlton Theatre), now known as the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank. Beginning with the 1976-77 season, the Orchestra formally moved their performances to the Monmouth Arts Center. The MAC was receptive to have the Orchestra move

the performances to the theatre since it was underutilized and in need of repair. During some performances, a net had to be suspended from the ceiling to catch any falling material. The cost to perform at the MAC was very reasonable. As the theatre began renovations and began attracting more national acts, the cost of renting the theatre rose dramatically, tripling over the next twenty years.

The orchestra grew to over 70 musicians over the past ten years, resulting in programming larger works for the orchestra. Hiring extra musicians became less of an issue. As has been the norm since the inception of the Orchestra, a soloist was featured on each concert.

Ticket prices in 1976 were \$12 for the four-concert season. Students and senior tickets were \$6. A SPONSOR would pay \$30 for two tickets, a PATRON would receive four tickets for \$60, a DONOR would receive six tickets for \$100, and a BENEFACTOR would receive \$250 for 8 tickets. In addition, the number of Subscribers and supporters increased dramatically.

In November of 1978, the Orchestra participated in a gala re-opening of a Huffman Koos store in Eatontown. The proceeds from this special concert benefitted three Monmouth County organizations – Riverview Hospital in Red Bank, the Monmouth Arts Foundation Merit Awards Program and the Orchestra.

The 1978 season brought a new face to the podium. Roy D. Gussman, who had been Principal Clarinetist with the Orchestra since 1976, was named Assistant Conductor, joining Associate Conductor John Carr and Music Director Joseph Szostak. Mr. Gussman holds a B.A. in Music Performance and Music Education from Jersey City State University and a Master of Arts in Clarinet Performance from the New England Conservatory. He also studied Conducting from Richard Pittman.

The final Gala Concert in 1979, celebrating 30 years of the Orchestra, honored four of the original members of the Orchestra, when it was the Spring Lake Sinfonietta. The four “*boys in the band*” as they were referred to in the Asbury Park Press article, were Michael H. - Goldwasser, president of the orchestra since 1952, who is a violinist; J. Edward Smith, violinist; Max Kayne, violist; and bassist Edward E. Jones.

GROWTH SPURT!

The population of Monmouth County increased dramatically between 1960-1980 growing from 334,401 in 1960 to 461,849 in 1970 to 503,173 in 1980. This increase brought people from North Jersey and the five boroughs of New York to the greater Shore area. Communities like Freehold Township, Manalapan, Marlboro, Middletown, Howell, and Aberdeen saw their populations increase 100-300%. With a larger population, the Orchestra was able to attract new players and a larger audience.

Citing his desire to dedicate more time to his teaching duties at Brookdale Community College, Joseph Szostak announced his resignation as Music Director after seven seasons at the end of the 1981-82 season. The Board of Director named John Carr as Music Director and Co-Conductor with Roy Gussman for the 1982-83 season. They would split the conducting duties for the season.

To keep up with the rising costs of rental costs of venues for rehearsals and concerts, and top-quality Guest Artists, the Board increased ticket prices. Subscriptions rose from \$10-\$15. Sponsors rose from \$30-\$40, Patrons from \$60-\$75, Donors and Benefactors remained at \$100 and \$250 respectively.

Upon Michael Goldwasser's retirement from the Orchestra, Alicia Rowe, flautist with the Orchestra was name President of the Board. Ms. Rowe had been with the Orchestra since 1954 and became only the second President of the Board. One change in the Presidency was the Conductors would select the soloists to appear with the Orchestra. This had been Mr. Goldwasser's responsibility from the beginning of the Orchestra. Upon Ms. Rowe assuming the Presidency, a new position of General Manager was created. This position was held by Orchestra violinist David Shrieves. Ms. Rowe would handle the external operations and Mr. Shrieves would handle the internal operations. Along with Ms. Rowe and Mr. Shrieves assuming their new positions, the By-Laws of the Orchestra, adopted in 1987, called for the Board to include seven members of the Orchestra, seven members of the League, thirteen Community members, the Concert Master and Conductor/Music Director. The ongoing challenge was to find interested community members to serve and bring different expertise to the Board.

A major change for the Orchestra was to move the subscription concerts from Tuesday evenings at 8:30, which had been in place from the first season to Sunday afternoons at 3:00. Concert times were set for Tuesday evenings from the very beginning for very practical reasons.many of the soloists and extra musicians came from the New York Philharmonic and Tuesday was traditionally the off night for the orchestra. Traveling from New York/North Jersey was time consuming so 8:30 seemed to be a good time to start the concert!

Throughout the 1980s, the Board of Directors worked tirelessly to generate funds to keep up with the rising costs of operating the orchestra. Searching for and applying for grants, advertising to bring in an audience for the concerts, printing of promotional flyers for distribution throughout the county. By the end of the decade, the yearly budget was close to \$30,000 and rising. The orchestra had an agreement with Local 399 of the American Federation of Musicians to pay union members a flat rate per concert which was below the negotiated rate by the local. As has been the case since the first season, each concert featured a Guest Artist. Financial facts at the end of the 1980s: ticket sales represented 34% of revenue, the League contributed 22% of revenue, 46% of revenue came from outside grants, dure from Orchestra members represented 4% of revenue (orchestra members were asked to pay \$25 dues and received two comp tickets for each concert), and payroll to musicians represents 40% of total expenses.

THE END OF THE CENTURY

To keep up with the ever-rising costs of doing business, the Board voted to raise ticket prices for the 1991-92 season. Subscriptions rose to \$30 (\$25 for Senior and Students). Sponsors are now \$100, Patrons are \$200 Donors are \$250 and Benefactors are \$300.

The 1991-1992 season began with the resignation of David Shrieves as Board member and General Manager. The Board named Ted Hunter, trumpet with the Orchestra and Board member, as the new General Manager, a position he held for over 25 years.

On June 14, 1992, the Orchestra lost John Carr to cancer at age 47. In addition to his years as Music Director of the Orchestra, he was band director at Holmdel High School and Director of the New Jersey State Youth Orchestra. John received the Governor's Award in Arts Education and was named a Master Music Teacher by the New Jersey Music Educators Association in 1991.

The Board quickly named Mr. Gussman as Music Director for the 1992-1993 season. For the 1993-1994 season, Mr. Gussman went into the orchestra and selected French Hornist Steven Gosewisch as Assistant Conductor. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Gosewisch was Assistant Conductor of the Monmouth Civic Chorus and Choir and Assistant Band Director at Howell High School. Mr. Gosewisch received his Bachelor of Music degree from Susquehanna University and a Master of Music Education from Northwestern University.

The Orchestra was invited to play the reopening of the newly renovated Paramount Theater in Asbury Park in January 1994. After the performance, the city of Asbury Park approached the Orchestra and offered a financial incentive to move their concerts from the Count Basie Theatre to the Paramount Theatre. Not having a contract with the Count Basie Theatre, the Orchestra moved the 1995-96 season to the Paramount Theatre. This was a cost-saving move for the Orchestra and a public relations investment for Asbury Park.

Alicia Rowe resigned the Presidency of the Board in 1994 and was replaced by Michele A. Mortensen, becoming the third Board President in the Orchestra's history. Ms. Mortensen oversaw the move to the Paramount Theatre

One of the strengths of the Orchestra and what makes it stand out from similar groups is the dedication of its members and their commitment to continuing with the Orchestra. One such member who was highlighted in a 1998 featured article in the Asbury Park Press was 82 year old bassist Edward Jones. Ed had been a member of the Spring Lake Sinfonietta in 1938. After serving in World War II, he returned to the area and joined the newly formed Orchestra in 1948. Ed continued playing with the orchestra through every change and serving as the librarian for over 40 years. Ed was honored at a concert in 1998, a concert he unfortunately could not play due to a carpal tunnel issue and was inducted into the Performing Musicians Hall of Fame at the concert.

1998 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Orchestra. To commemorate this milestone, the Orchestra added a Gala Anniversary Concert at the Spring Lake Theatre where the first concert took place. The concert took place on January 23 and was advertised as black tie optional. The program recreated the first concert by the Spring Lake Sinfonietta which included Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave) by Mendelssohn, the L'Arlesienne Suite by Bizet, and Symphony No. 41, "Jupiter," by Mozart.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

From the earliest days of the Monmouth Little Symphony, the leadership of the Orchestra felt strongly that offering concerts and other educational outreach to the youth of Monmouth County was of paramount concern. When the Orchestra moved rehearsals to the Wannamassa School, they offered free concerts to the children of the Ocean Township Schools. One such concert took place on February 3, 1958. As reported in the Asbury Park Press, over 800 children attended a concert of the Monmouth Little Symphony at Ocean Township High School at 8:00pm. The concert was co-sponsored by the Musicians Performance Trust Fund and Local 399 of the American Federation of Musicians. Discounted tickets were always made available for each concert throughout the years. Upon the death of Michael Goldwasser in 1988, his wife, Beverly announced that the Orchestra would offer a scholarship in his name which continues today. The scholarship is offered to a Monmouth County resident qualifying for June Graduation from any public or private high school in Monmouth County. Originally, the scholarship was only for students playing a string instrument, but with declining enrollment in string orchestra programs in Monmouth County high schools, the scholarship was eventually opened to all music students in the county. The applicant intends to continue the study of music in one of the following areas: Music Education, Music History, Performance, Music Theory and Composition, Music Business/Management Music and Music Therapy. The first \$500 award was given in 1990 to cellist Jennier Cho. The award was increased to \$750 in 2024. Beginning in 1993, the Orchestra began the Young Artists Concerto Competition. Originally the Competition was open to any high school student in the state, but the Board made a change in 2022 to focus the competition to students in Monmouth, Ocean and Middlesex Counties.

THE NEW MILLENUM

With a roster of over 70 regular musicians, the Orchestra began the new Millennium with gusto. Programming expanded to include a Holiday Pops Concert (2005), and joint concert with the New Jersey State Youth Orchestra (2007). New works by local composers were featured, including works by Hazlet native Patrick Valentino (2006), Bradley Beach resident Timothy Broege (2002), Ed Prince (2007) Mario Lombardo (2008) and Carlton Wilkinson (2009). Pre-Concert lectures were introduced, featuring interviews with guest soloists and discussions on the music being performed that day.

The reality of the economics of the new millennium began to have a serious effect on the Orchestra. For the first time, guest soloists were limited or eliminated from programming. Local solo artists were secured for various concerts. Grant funding from organizations like the Monmouth Arts Council and Monmouth County Freeholders was greatly reduced or totally eliminated. Reliance on ticket sales, the ad book, and fund raisers by the League became more important. Thankfully, Wall Township High School was available for rehearsals thanks to Board President Les Hollander (2002) and Roy Gussman who were both music teachers at the high school. The Orchestra moved back to the newly renovated Count Basie Theatre for the 2002-2003 season.

Individual tickets were \$20 for Adults, \$18 for Seniors and \$5 for students. Subscriptions were \$65 for Adults. Donation levels were: Sponsors - \$50, Benefactors - \$100, Silver Patrons - \$150, Gold Patrons - \$300 and Platinum Patrons - \$500

2006 was not a good year.....On January 12, Associate Conductor Steve Gosewisch passed away suddenly due to a Cerebral Hemorrhage at age 51. The devastated Orchestra regrouped, and Mr. Gussman took over conducting the concert scheduled for January 29, but the concert had to be postponed due to emergency repairs to the Count Basie Theatre, the first postponement in the Orchestra's history. The concert was rescheduled for February 19, but the soloist, Karen Hauge, a senior at Monmouth Regional High School, could not perform due to a scheduled trip to France. Her appearance was rescheduled to March 26.

The 2007-2008 season introduced Lucian Rinando as Assistant Conductor. Mr. Rinando had been the first chair Flautist with the Orchestra. Mr. Rinando received his Bachelor of Music Performance from Duquesne University and received training from the Conductors Institute at Bard College.

Between 2000-2010, the Board continued to expand and deal with the many financial issues facing the Orchestra. Rising costs for renting performance space at the Count Basie Theatre led to investigating the use of other venues, including Wall High School. Les Hollander replaced Michele Mortensen in 2002 when she moved out of the area. Mr. Hollander remained as President until 2008 when Orchestra Bassoonist John Preusse took office. The League continued to be the financial backbone of the Orchestra, raising tens of thousands of dollars for the Orchestra. By the end of the 2009-2010 season, the annual budget for the orchestra was just short of \$50,000 and the orchestra was breaking even. Board minutes indicated much discussion on how to cut costs and increase ticket sales and overall revenue.

2010-2020 - THE TIMES ARE A'CHANGING

The Orchestra continued to offer varied themed programming with a "Halloween Tricks and Mountainous Treats" program on October 30, 2011. Richard Sachs, Board Vice President created an audience survey in 2010 to gauge audience interest and to find out how they heard of the

Orchestra. Survey results were interesting..... "more opera", "orchestra with Chorus", "all Sibelius", "no Sibelius" "Broadway and pops concerts". The final concert of the 2010-2011 season featured a Marimba Soloist and a piece written in 1994 which featured an accordion and alto sax. The March 24, 2015, concert honored the 50th Anniversary of the Monmouth Conservatory of Music. The Orchestra has had a long-standing relationship with the Conservatory with both groups residing in Red Bank. Many Orchestra members have taught at the Conservatory. The concert featured Vladislav Kovalsky performing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. Also featured on this concert was a Symphony written by Gilman Collier, former Music Director of the Orchestra. During Mr. Collier's final hospital stay in 2010, he gave Mr. Kovalsky an envelope containing a manuscript of the Symphony, saying "*I want you to have it*" without any hope of it being performed. Mr. Kovalsky spoke with Mr. Gussman who contacted a long-time friend and colleague Rick Hambright who took the handwritten manuscript and turned it into instrumental parts – a task that took over 1000 hours!

The Orchestra has always relied on newspaper advertisements, featured articles and reviews from the Asbury Park Press. An audience survey confirmed the importance of the newspaper articles and reviews, but more people are using social media -Facebook, Twitter, email, smart phones.

Richard Sachs took on the Presidency of the Board in 2011 after John Preusse resigned. The size of the Board of Directors decreased over the past years. Committees were formed to deal with specific action items such as advertising, publicity, marketing, finance, operations, grants. Concert expenses continue to increase as ticket sales decrease. In an effort to increase the Orchestra's brand, high quality color posters and brochures were created. The Board decided to utilize an outside vendor to coordinate subscriber ticket sales, collect money, sort tickets and mail tickets to subscribers for multi-concerts, which would ease the work needed by the board but would cut into the profit from ticket sales.

In order to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of non-profit organizations, a revision of the Orchestra's By-Laws was done in 2014. The original document was adopted in 1954 and again in 2004. Much had changed in the last ten years, so a revision was required.

By mid-decade, it became obvious that the Board had to begin to reinvent themselves and attempt new activities to raise funds. Up to now, the League had been responsible for creating activities to generate income and the Board would seek grants and sell tickets. Board Treasurer Toni Wilke organized a wine tasting event for May 2014 at the home of future Board member Rob Adamson. This was the first activity of this kind.

The Board held a Strategic Planning session in 2014 to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the Orchestra. This work directed the Board's activities for the next few years. One outgrowth of this planning was adopting a revision to the Orchestra's Constitution to better reflect how the Board and Orchestra are presently operating.

For the majority of the years of the Orchestra, the majority of Board members had been members of the Orchestra. By the end of the decade, there was a move to bring in new Board members who were not in the Orchestra and had specific skills in leading organizations, fund raising, technology, etc. Richard Sachs stepped down from the Presidency and was replaced by Frank Hughes, who was the long-time music educator in the Toms River Schools and had been President of the All-Shore Band Directors Association. At the same time, job descriptions for Board positions were developed with clear expectations for each.

One of the first new activities Mr. Hughes brought to the Orchestra was to hold a Golf Outing in 2016. This became a fun event which included golf, food, raffles and a great way to get the name of the Orchestra out to the public. In addition to Mr. Hughes, other non-musician Board members came on Board and created activities which raised needed funds which were lost when the League disbanded.

At the end of the 2014-15 season Associate Conductor Lucian Rinando left the orchestra. Once again, Mr. Gussman went into the Orchestra and selected Barbara Santoro as Associate Conductor for the 2015-2016 season. Ms. Santoro has been a clarinetist with the orchestra since 1983. She holds a B.A. in Music Education and an M.A. in Music Education from Trenton State College (now the College of New Jersey). In addition, she has been a conductor of numerous concert bands for over 40 years. Ms. Santoro is also a Board member who is responsible for Educational Outreach and became the first female of the Orchestra.

As the cost of doing business at the Count Basie Theatre continued to rise and the ability for the Orchestra to secure concert dates they desired diminished, a move to the new Michael T. Lake Performing Arts Center at Neptune High School was made for the 2017-18 season. The Lake PAC was perfect for the Orchestra. In addition, the Orchestra offered in-kind educational outreach to the district, offering masterclasses and free tickets.

In 2016, the Orchestra was contacted by the National Hockey League to investigate the possibility of the Orchestra providing a short video of Mr. Gussman conducting the orchestra which would be used in a video to be shown on the NHL Network, highlighting how conducting an orchestra is similar to how a hockey team operates. The Orchestra recorded the video performing the end of Marche Slav by Tchaikovsky.

During the 2016 season, Mr. Hughes had to step down for personal reasons and Vice President Tom Avakian, long-time member of the Orchestra took over as Acting President. Mr. Hughes submitted his resignation from the Board in 2018 and Mr. Avakian became President, a position he held until having to step down for medical reasons at the end of the 2019 season. Barbara Santoro agreed to become the Interim Board President until the Board could find a permanent replacement.

With a new concert home, the Orchestra continued to perform at a high level and the Board continued their work to solidify operations and raise needed funds.

Continuing to address Educational Outreach, the Orchestra held a *Partnership in Performance* Concert on February 8, 2020 with the New Jersey State Youth Orchestra. Each group performed separately and combined to perform the *ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE*.

....AND THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED!!

Covid-19 hit the world, and everything changed. By March 10, 2020, all activities stopped. The nation was in quarantine. The Orchestra canceled the rest of the season with no idea when they could return to the stage. With no concerts, income stopped but the fixed expenses such as insurance and storage unit rental continued. With the help of her husband Nick Santoro, long-time trumpet player with the Orchestra and the Board's Grant Writer, Board President Barbara Santoro was able to find financial relief by applying for two government Covid relief grants specifically for non-profit arts organizations who were suffering financial hardship due to the shutdown. These grants totaled \$15,000 and the Orchestra was able to meet its financial obligations.

March 10th also marked a very sad day for the Orchestra. Long-time trumpet player, General Manager and Board member Edwin T. Hunter (Ted) passed away at age 86. The Orchestra received a letter from Ted's family stating that Ted had directed his estate to donate \$25,000 to the Orchestra upon his death. This generous donation allowed the Orchestra to move forward during the pandemic shutdown. The Board also announced that the First Trumpet Chair in the Orchestra be named the Edwin T. Hunter Chair in perpetuity.

The Orchestra used the pandemic shutdown to reevaluate operations, take a step back and look at all aspects of the Orchestra. By this time, the ad book which was compiled by the League and supplied a revenue stream had been suspended with more businesses using social media for advertisement. Newspaper articles and music reviews had also stopped. The printing of color brochures and flyers that used to be displayed in local businesses was no longer a prudent way to advertise the Orchestra. The return on investment became a negative.

Board meetings were now held via Zoom, which would continue and became an effective way for the Board to do business.

As the initial Covid-19 hit lessened during the summer, the annual Golf Outing was able to continue in August, bringing in some much-needed revenue. Board members continued to develop new income streams. New Board member Walter Kaczka brought up the idea of a raffle which was very successful in the community in which he lived. Limited to 250 tickets, each costing \$50, participants are entered in 10 monthly drawings. Each winning ticket receives \$500, and the winning ticket is then returned to the pool so participants can win again.

Plans to return to performing were made for the 2020-2021 season began but another obstacle was presented to the Orchestra. Rehearsals were being held at APPLEWOOD ESTATES, a full-

service senior living community in Freehold. The facility is operated by the CentraState Healthcare System. Since the pandemic was still raging, we were not able to do our rehearsals there until CentraState felt it safe to bring in outsiders to the facility. The Neptune School District also shut down outside groups from utilizing school facilities and announced they would no longer rent their facilities on Sundays. Inquiries to other school districts resulted in similar results. Without rehearsal space and a concert venue, the Orchestra was faced with no place to play. In addition, Orchestra members were very leery to come out even if there was a place to play, so the 2020-2021 season was canceled.

To replace the Orchestra's live performances, the Orchestra created Virtual Concerts which were posted on all social media outlets, where the musicians would record their part to Bizet's TOREADOR SONG, which would then be sent to a former student of Nick Santoro who would create the video. Next came a Virtual Concert of A SONG FOR HEALTH, a piece written by Steven Verheist in appreciation for all health care and public service workers at the forefront of the pandemic. In addition, various Orchestra members created their own short musical presentations.

THE NEW NORMAL

New members joined the Board, bringing different insights to the operations. By 2021, the operations of the Orchestra and Board had moved entirely online. Board documents were moved to Google, all communications were being done electronically. After much research by President Santoro, the Board had moved to an online program – *Salsa Engage*, to coordinate ticket sales, marketing, fundraising and advocacy. The cost for this program would be substantially less than the combined costs of all previous marketing efforts. The Board could create one flyer for the season and have it posted on all social media sites and emailed to over 1000 people. Tickets could be purchased online for all concerts and events and contact information for those people would be collected automatically.

By the Spring of 2021, Covid restrictions lessened, and plans were made for the 2021-2022 season. Rehearsal space was still an issue, and the Orchestra was not sure if/when a return to Applewood Estates would be possible. The biggest issue was to find an appropriate concert venue. The conductors began a search for possible concert venues. The use of a high school auditorium would be problematic because the schools could not give the Orchestra dates until all school activities were scheduled. This would not allow us to plan a concert season in advance. Various churches were also investigated.

The first planned concert in the Fall of 2021 could not take place due to uncertainty from many orchestra members regarding returning. The conductors decided that all members needed to be vaccinated and wear masks. The next concert, scheduled for February, 2022 also was canceled for similar reasons. The final two concerts were able to be held at Freehold Township HS and were successful...although the new lighting system which was to have been installed at the school had not taken place, so proper lighting was a problem....but the Orchestra did perform.

During this time, the Board continued to work on revising operations. Finances were reviewed, proper forms were filed on time, operations were streamlined. The Orchestra looked entirely different than it did pre-pandemic.

For the 2022-2023 season, a new home was found! St. Rose of Lima Church in Freehold welcomed the Orchestra to their wonderful church and Chapel. A four-concert season was planned with the first three concerts held in the church and the last concert to be held in the Chapel. Each facility offered excellent acoustics, ample parking, and a comfortable environment for the audience.

Interim Board President Barbara Santoro announced her resignation as President effective on January 1, 2022. With her duties as Associate Conductor, overseeing the Concert Competition and the Goldwasser Scholarship and her position as Educational Outreach, serving as President would be too much. Nicholas Santoro, who had been the Grant Writer for the Board and oversaw the Raffle agreed to take over the Presidency. Mr. Santoro had been President of the New Jersey Music Educators Association and a Music/Arts Supervisor in public schools for over 25 years.

With the pandemic officially “over”, the Orchestra took all that was learned from the shutdown and moved full speed ahead in the 2022-2023 season. Four wonderful concerts were held, attendance increased with each concert, although not quite to the level of pre-pandemic concerts. The Orchestra featured “Educators as Artists”. The soloists were all music educators actively teaching in schools who are also fabulous musicians.

The Diamond Anniversary Season of 2023-2024 continued with the “Educators as Artists”. And included a euphonium soloist, an instrument very rarely seen with an orchestra. A Gala concert was planned to end the season. Working with the Neptune School District, the Orchestra was able to secure the Lake Performing Arts Center for a June 1 Gala Concert. Pianist Ron Levy, who had performed with the orchestra in the past, offered his talents to be a part of the Gala Concert. In addition, a Gala Luncheon was planned for the following day to celebrate 75 years of the Monmouth Symphony Orchestra.

The Board President Nicholas Santoro held an in-depth conversation at the March 2024 Board meeting on how the Board would handle a succession of the Music Director position. One of the strengths of the Orchestra has been the dedication of orchestra members and their long-standing positions with the Orchestra. Many of the musicians have been with the Orchestra between 30-40 years, including Music Director Roy Gussman and Associate Conductor Barbara Santoro. The Board approved a plan to secure a smooth transition when retirements occur. Beginning on July 1, 2024, Roy Gussman would be appointed Music Director Emeritus and would still be conducting the Orchestra. The Position of Music Director would be given to Barbara Santoro. In this position, Ms. Santoro would be charged with beginning a search for a new Music Director when the time comes for her to relinquish the position, in addition to making the music decisions for the Orchestra. It will also be her responsibility to formally document the duties of the Music

Director and other operations of the Orchestra so there will be a smooth transition and the Board will better understand how the musical side of the Orchestra operates.