

QUARTER NOTES

HARTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SUMMER 2026

LEARNING & SOCIAL IMPACT = HSO IN THE COMMUNITY



Most everyone is familiar with the symphony's performances in the concert hall, but what you may not realize is that some of our most exciting programs happen in much smaller venues: in churches, libraries, classrooms, senior centers, hospitals and more. Our goal is to bring the music TO people, wherever they may be, and make the HSO accessible and relevant to every unique audience from toddlers to elders. The ones who are responsible for making that happen are Andy Robbin and Jen Phipps, the amazing two-person team behind HSO's Learning & Social Impact (LSI) division.

During the 2025/26 season, Andy

Robbin, Director of LSI, and Jennifer Phipps, LSI Manager, coordinated more than 106 events in the community, ranging from musician workshops in small classroom settings to ensemble performances in larger community spaces. Andy and Jen have made it possible for the HSO musicians to reach thousands of children in schools (via our ensemble-based Symphony in Schools program) as well as countless adults through performances in senior residential settings, hospitals and other health care facilities (known as HSO's Musicians Care project), and other community spaces.

To ensure that workshops and performances are relevant to the chosen audience, LSI helps HSO musicians

with professional development, which enables the various ensembles to create curriculum-centric programming for children, as well as innovative programming for adults. Rather than a "menu-driven" system, the HSO musician ensembles now create programs that are meaningful and relevant to their audience. This season, HSO created over 23 programs in schools throughout Hartford, East Hartford, Farmington, Meriden, Avon and Terryville, just to name a few.

In 2025/26, our Artist in Residence, Curtis Stewart, worked closely with the LSI team to bring especially meaningful programming to schoolchildren throughout our region. He spoke about his own career and performed in multiple locations, including three different classes at the Irving Robbins Middle School in Farmington, for 7th and 8th graders at Mansfield Middle School, and with two classes at the East Hartford Middle School, where he also helped students learn improvisational techniques.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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HARTFORD
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HSO PROGRAMS ARE FUNDED IN PART BY:



FALCETTI PIANOS





Curtis Stewart at the Artists Collective on March 18, 2026, with students from Ana Grace Academy of the Arts.

While some schools only have time to schedule a few classroom visits during the school year, we were able to develop deeper and more meaningful relationships with the children through repeated interactions over the course of the school year. Specifically, Curtis Stewart was involved in multiple sessions with middle school children in Avon, spoken word



Curtis Stewart with students at Covenant Prep



Curtis Stewart (far right) with students from the Hartt School Community Division.

students from the Artists Collective, and with the students at the Ana Grace Academy of the Arts, which culminated in a 60-minute performance at the Artists Collective on March 18, 2026. The evening featured a performance of Prince's "Let's Go Crazy" by the Ana Grace students, as well as performances by the Avon middle school children and spoken word students from the Artists Collective. Students shared their achievements with one another and a public audience.

Andy & Jen, together with wonderful HSO musicians, have created the unique HSO Extended "Press Play" series, an eclectic mix of music, drinks, food and fun in partnership with a local restaurant. This year, the four-part series took place at *J Under the Dome* (the new venue of the popular J's Restaurant at 1 Sequassen Street in Hartford). The most recent event was held on April 30, 2026, and HSO musicians performed for an audience of over 100, with a program that showcased music from the 90s. The series has proven to be a resounding success.

The LSI team is central to HSO's mission to make certain that everyone in our community has access to great music. Their hard work in the community is paying off. Children

and parents are excited, and our community events are gaining popularity. People are noticing, talking and responding. Every child who connects with the HSO is enriched and encouraged. 

A HUGE THANK YOU

to the donors who make these programs possible, and this is your invitation to become a supporter.

To share in the thrill of making a difference, contact Director of Development Eric Hutchinson at ehutchinson@hartfordsymphony.org. You will be rewarded tenfold.

SPONSORS FOR OUR LSI EVENTS

(alphabetical order):

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The Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust
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Henry Luce Foundation
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SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

PeoplesBank:

An unshakeable commitment to support community

On March 30, 2026, downtown Hartford was delighted to welcome the opening of the newest retail banking center of PeoplesBank, a continuation of the wonderful partnership between the bank and Hartford which began with the opening of the PeoplesBank Arena, formerly known as the XL Center/ Hartford Civic Center. In more good news for Hartford, PeoplesBank plans an even larger presence in our city with the opening of corporate offices in the building right above the new banking center location at 151 Asylum Street. The partnership between PeoplesBank and Hartford means so much more than just a new downtown bank. New corporate offices will bring workers and foot traffic to our downtown area, who will patronize local restaurants and shops. And, because PeoplesBank measures success not just in dollars earned but by how much it gives back to the communities it serves, the presence of PeoplesBank in Hartford also means a commitment of philanthropic support for our region.

Matthew Bannister, who proudly serves as Senior VP of Corporate Responsibility and Sponsorships for PeoplesBank, understands the importance of philanthropy and the bank's commitment to community. Starting with a background in advertising (focused



Matthew Bannister serves as Senior VP of Corporate Responsibility and Sponsorships for PeoplesBank.

on anti-tobacco campaigns), Matt next spent time working in communications for the American Heart Association. That experience gave him deep appreciation of the impact made by the nonprofit community, and the important role of corporate philanthropy. Matt's work in the nonprofit sector made him the perfect candidate for his current job: for the past ten years, Matt has helped direct corporate responsibility for PeoplesBank and he is delighted to be on the "giving side" of philanthropy, helping to support communities.

What makes PeoplesBank different? "Most banks," explains Matt, "have

the same products – savings accounts, checking accounts, mortgages and commercial lending, but an institution that recognizes the importance of giving back to the community it serves makes all the difference." With that simple commitment, PeoplesBank gives \$1.8 million annually to the communities it serves. Many banks support their communities, but what makes PeoplesBank unique is a financial investment in the local community that begins well before the bank's presence is made official. Long before the opening of each retail office, PeoplesBank explores the nonprofit landscape and goes out of their way to introduce themselves



PeoplesBank supports Celebrate West Hartford.



PeoplesBank supports The Salvation Army in Hartford.



PeoplesBank supports Capital Squash in Hartford.

to the community, offering meaningful financial support to local organizations. Matt explained it this way: "We provide local support even before we move in, so that when we finally arrive, we are not the stranger in town. We have already established friendships and positive relationships."

This is precisely the strategy the Bank used to make a difference in Hartford. Hartford's recent economic growth and expansion has been attracting new business to our region and PeoplesBank seized the opportunity to have a meaningful impact. Long before the banking center in Hartford was opened, the Bank made a commitment to the city and invested funds to help restore the old XL Center to what is now the new PeoplesBank Arena. Matt explained that the Bank's decision to invest in the old arena was driven by a precise need identified by city officials.

"While philanthropy can increase if the bank has a good year, we also want to make sure that our annual giving doesn't drop off if we were to have a leaner year. The dollars generated by the foundation help to ensure a consistent level of philanthropy."

"Renovating and reinvigorating the Arena is important to Hartford, so that's where we invested our dollars" said Matt. PeoplesBank Arena helps stimulate economic activity in the downtown region with a much-needed investment that is bringing in top talent as demonstrated by the new website: <https://www.peoplesbankarena.com/>.

PeoplesBank may be relatively new to Connecticut, but it is hardly a new institution. Founded in 1885 with original headquarters in Holyoke, MA, PeoplesBank combines long-standing financial stability with a commitment to innovation and expansion. The

Hartford retail office is the newest in our state, but it joins other locations in Avon, East Granby, Glastonbury, South Windsor, Suffield and West Hartford. What is remarkable is that because of the presence of PeoplesBank, these Connecticut communities now receive roughly 35% of the bank's philanthropic dollars. As the bank continues its plans to expand into more CT neighborhoods, it also has plans to increase its giving.

Matt understands that nonprofits need stability and unrestricted operational support dollars. As a result, once the bank makes a

commitment to an organization, operational support invariably continues annually, at a reliably consistent level. In the world of corporate philanthropy, consistency is rare and precious. To maintain a consistent level of corporate philanthropy, the bank utilizes two strategies: funds held in a separate foundation are used entirely for philanthropy and in addition, annual funds from the bank's profits are earmarked for corporate giving. Matt explained it this way: "While philanthropy can increase if the bank has a good year, we also want to make sure that our annual giving doesn't drop off if we were to have a leaner year. The dollars generated by the foundation help to ensure a consistent level of philanthropy."

In November of 2025, the threatened elimination of SNAP (the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits created a crisis for families who were already facing food insecurity. PeoplesBank immediately responded, making a gift of \$100,000 to different food banks. The additional dollars increased corporate giving from \$1.7 to \$1.8 million, and PeoplesBank has committed to maintain or increase that annual philanthropic level.

Matt further explained the bank's giving policy: "We will never be the largest donor, because saying one big 'Yes' means too many 'Noes.' Once we make a commitment, we hope to continue it. We would rather be a steady source of funding, and this helps to reduce the likelihood that support for an agency might be cut." The focused areas of funding for PeoplesBank includes housing, social services and food insecurity, financial



PeoplesBank employees at Great Futures Event, helping Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford

literacy, early childhood literacy, sustainability (environment) and community, a "catch-all" bucket that allows support for everything from the arts to local Little League teams.

The culture of giving embodied by PeoplesBank goes beyond the corporate structure. It is built into the hiring process. There is an expectation that PeoplesBank employees will volunteer, and they are rewarded for those efforts. Each month, an employee is recognized as an exemplary volunteer, and the Bank goes out of its way to promote a culture of caring and giving. "We want

our associates to know that if they care about a particular cause and are involved with a nonprofit, we will make that one of our priorities as well."

Kevin Sullivan is the AVP Banking Center Manager of the Hartford office, and his welcoming smile greets everyone who walks in the door. As one of the bank's employees, he is now spending more of his personal time in Hartford, enjoying great theater, great restaurants and the many cultural events the city has to offer. As a new board member of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Kevin is deeply committed to the vibrancy of the arts, and all that makes Hartford a very special place.

In addition to providing generous support for the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, PeoplesBank also supports other organizations in our region, including the Hartford Boys & Girls Club, Hartford YMCA, Riverfront Recapture, Hands on Hartford, CT Foodshare, the Metro Hartford Alliance and many, many others.. 



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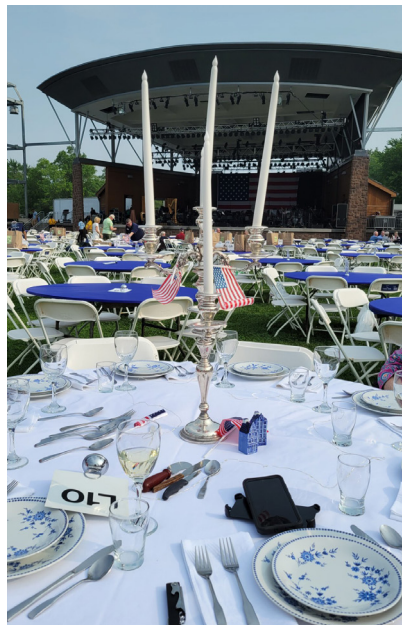
THIRTY YEARS OF THE TALCOTT MOUNTAIN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND TWO SUPER FANS

Mark Waterhouse and Leslie Cosgrove:
A legacy of philanthropy and a love of music.



Every night of the Talcott Mountain Music Festival, Mark Waterhouse and Leslie Cosgrove, life partners for more than 45 years, can be found in the same place: at Table L 10, entertaining a different group of animated friends at every concert. With a table marked by their distinctive and easily recognized candelabra, Mark and Leslie have not missed a single concert in all the years of the Festival. Their steadfast loyalty and dedication is unparalleled. They attend concerts in all weather, from blazing sunshine to drizzles and downpours. Mark laughed, recalling, "We even showed up twice when the concert was cancelled because of rain after we got there. It never occurred to us to stay home!"

HSO's Talcott Mountain Music Festival is a well-established fixture of the summer music scene in Connecticut. The 2026 season marks the 30th year of the summer Festival, and as we ac-



knowledge the wonderful achievement of uninterrupted continuity, we also remember a time when HSO's summer festival was just a dream. Mark and Leslie remember that too. This duo are more than "super-fans" - their passion began when the festival

was still just the germ of an idea. In no small measure, they helped make the festival possible.

The idea of a summer music festival for the Hartford Symphony began as the brainchild of Margery Steinberg (then Board President of the Hartford Symphony), multiple dedicated board members (including Chuck Bleich and Ken Jacobson, both now deceased), countless beloved volunteers, key musicians (notably Steve Perry and Carole Olefsky), and a team of people who advocated on behalf of the symphony, including Simsbury's First Selectman, Mary Glassman. Leslie Cosgrove was a key figure in those early efforts. As Economic Development Coordinator for the Town of Simsbury, she advocated on behalf of the project, and worked hand in hand with all those on the HSO team, determined to create a music venue centered in the town of Simsbury.

Leslie knew what it would take to get the project off the ground. In her prior position as economic development coordinator for the town of Marlborough, an attempt had been made to create a performance venue there for the HSO and the Harford Ballet, but the project never materialized. By the time Leslie began her position with Simsbury, she already had a good idea of what it would take to succeed. While the first few years of the Talcott Music Mountain Festival were held on properties owned by The Hartford and later CL&P, the effort to create a downtown music venue in Simsbury was massive, Leslie recalls, and involved more than 100 people working together, on a variety of committees and sub-committees, creating an economic strategic plan that would bring the venue to downtown Simsbury.

(as well as the University of Paris) and has been in Connecticut ever since. With a dedication to public service, Leslie served as Vice President of an economic development consulting firm headed by Ed Stockton, the former Director of the Department of Economic Development of the State of CT who at one time, also served as Mayor of Bloomfield. She worked on the project that created the International Skating Center of Connecticut in Simsbury, and remains heavily involved in various community projects, including the restoration of the

"The effort to create a downtown music venue in Simsbury was massive ... and involved more than 100 people working together, on a variety of committees and sub-committees ..."

Leslie and Mark are economic development specialists who both studied psychology. They ultimately met through their work in economic development and together form a powerful team. Born in Boston, with roots that can be traced back to the Puritans, Leslie's ancestral family originally owned Martha's Vineyard, purchased in 1640 under a charter from the King of England. The family farm on the Vineyard (which Leslie recalls fondly) was called "Hancock-Mitchell Farm", in recognition of John Hancock, (yes, THAT John Hancock) a cousin. Leslie moved to Connecticut to attend the University of Hartford and Trinity College

First Congregational Church in the town of Barkhamsted, CT where they live.

Mark, a Connecticut native, originally had plans to become a child clinical psychologist, but wryly recalls that "Vietnam and the Selective Service intervened." He joined the Marines and served in Vietnam as a Combat Engineer. After leaving the service, he found work as a job developer for an anti-poverty agency before moving to a broader economic development role in the City of Milford's new Department of Community Development. A proud graduate of Dartmouth, Mark attended the University

of Oklahoma for graduate training, which was then the only school that offered training in economic development. Mark ultimately became Dean of the program, and for more than 30 years, taught at the University's Economic Development Institute.

Mark remains close to his undergraduate classmates and is proud of the "Dartmouth network" he has maintained, including Robert Reich (former U.S. Secretary of Labor), Jonathan Newcomb (former Chairman of publishing giant Simon & Schuster), Henry "Hank" Paulson (former CEO of Goldman Sachs and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury) and Roger Witten (one of the attorneys who served on the Watergate Special Prosecution Task Force.) Mark remains a devoted Dartmouth alum and helped create a Dartmouth Arts Legacy Committee and funding source with many of his Dartmouth classmates.



Talcott Mountain Music Festival

2026 LINEUP



Like Leslie, Mark has no interest in "retiring", and remains open to all opportunities, saying, "I haven't met my next project yet." Their energy is infectious, and Mark and Leslie make lifelong friends wherever they go. For example, Mark worked on a strategic plan for St. Croix (and later a twenty-year economic vision and plan for the U.S. Virgin Islands), and for the past 25 years, he and Leslie return annually to St. Croix, enjoying the friendships they developed. Mark worked on a strategic development plan for the city of Danville, Kentucky, and not surprisingly, they both are now regular attendees at the three-day Great American Brass Band Festival, held annually in Danville. They passionately look forward to the

festival each year, both for the great music and the ability to reunite with the countless friends made while working on several projects in the city. Locally, Mark has worked on the Farmington Industrial Park, as well as Avon Park North and South. (The property was originally owned by Ensign Bickford, one of Mark's clients.)

Together, Mark and Leslie delight in the achievements of Mark's three children and their five grand- and step-grandchildren. They are devoted not only to their community, but to the betterment of others. In addition to the Dartmouth scholarship created in Mark's name, their support of the Hartford Symphony, UNICEF, Operation Smile and more, Leslie

supports a child in Haiti through the World Vision Haiti, her third. They care about making a difference. That is their legacy.

Mark and Leslie have a shared vision: "Philanthropy is part of why you are here on this earth – we have an obligation to make the world better and if everyone would do their part, we will succeed." Mark's philosophy is summed up in a song lyric, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

We are so fortunate to have Mark and Leslie as part of HSO family; and this summer, during one of the Talcott concerts, just stop by table L10 and say hello to them. You'll be forever glad you did.

DE COM POSED

Dame Ethel Smyth

Raised in repressive Victorian-era England, Dame Ethel Mary Smyth defied convention. She was an openly queer composer, conductor, author and civil rights activist, who was friends with Clara Schumann, Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Virginia Wolff, and worked alongside jailed leader Emmeline Pankhurst in the fight for women's suffrage. She was knighted as Commander of the British Empire in 1922, the first woman to receive damehood for her contributions in composition and literature. She was the first woman composer to have an opera performed by the Metropolitan Opera. And yet she has largely been forgotten to history.

Ethel Mary Smyth, the fourth of eight children, was born into a military family on April 22, 1858, in Sidcup, an area in southeast London, England. While her family was not musical, she was influenced by a governess who had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. Smyth's father, General J.H.P. Smyth, recognized and even encouraged his daughter's early musical talent. Growing up in an environment of relative financial privilege, she received piano lessons and developed an early passion for music. She soon exhibited her strong-willed personality, and at the age of eight, wrote in her diary that her ambition was "to be made a Peeress in my own right because of music."

Smyth attended school at Putney where she studied music, drawing, French, German, chemistry, literature, and "how to darn stockings." Her formal music training began when she was 17, with Alexander Ewing. Two years later, she overheard her



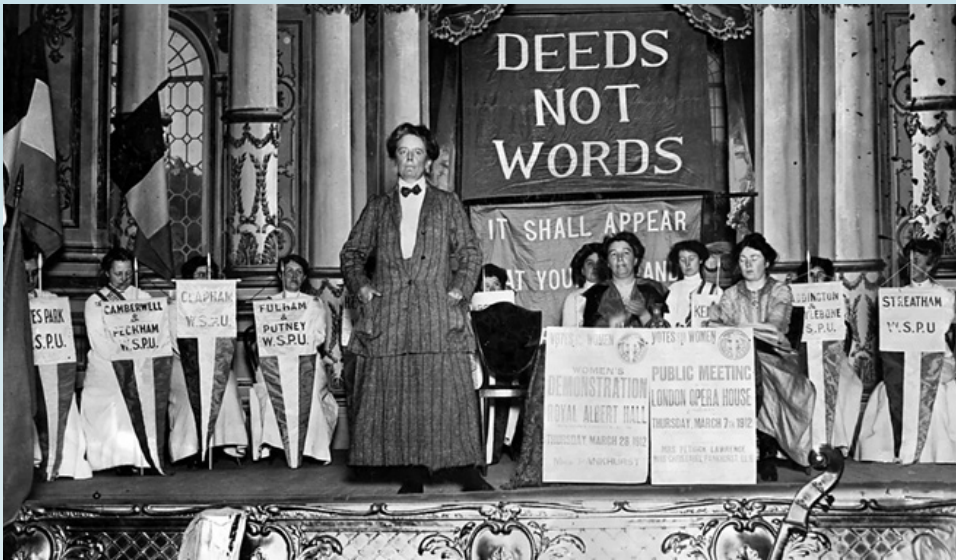
Dame Ethel Mary Smyth

parents speak of their plans for their daughter's "coming out season of balls and beaux." Smyth would have none of it. She was openly determined to pursue her artistic ambitions and dared to defy the era's societal expectations of her class. Recalling this conflict with her parents, Smyth later wrote:

"I quite deliberately adopted the methods used years afterwards in political warfare by other

women, who, having plumbed the depths of masculine prejudice, came to see that this was the only road to victory. I not only unfurled the red flag but determined to make life at home so intolerable that they would have to let me go, for their sakes. Towards the end I struck altogether, refused to go to church, refused to sing at our dinner parties, refused to go out riding, refused to speak to anyone and one day father's boot all but penetrated a panel of my locked bedroom door... [until] there was nothing for it but to capitulate."

While her choices were not supported by her family, it is also clear that the financial support she received from her parents enabled her to eschew expected roles for women, thus paving the way for her journey in music and an unconventional lifestyle. It is notable that England's Royal Conservatory did admit women, but there was a tacit understanding that they were expected to pursue careers in teaching. The study of composition



Smyth (standing center) at Women's Social and Political Union meeting in 1912.

was acceptable provided the woman only wrote lilting melodies to grace a drawing room. Smyth was looking for something quite different.

Her rebellion against conformity succeeded, and in the autumn of 1877, she enrolled in the Leipzig Conservatory to study with renowned composer Carl Reinecke. Her years in Germany enveloped her in a flourishing musical scene and shaped her into a skilled composer. She was encouraged in her career by Antonin Dvořák and Johannes Brahms, and while a student, was introduced to Edvard Grieg, Pyotr Tchaikovsky and fellow composer/pianist Clara Schumann. But after a year at the Conservatory, she quit in frustration because she could not find someone at the institution willing to teach her orchestration. She turned to Tchaikovsky, who advised that she should study on her own. At that point, she privately engaged Austrian composer Henrich von Herzogenberg to teach her.

Upon her return to England, Smyth struggled for recognition. In the

mid-1880s, very few of her works were heard in public performance. Not only was it difficult for any composer to have a work performed, but critics found her compositions "deficient in the feminine charm that might have been expected

of a woman composer." Smyth's compositions were characterized by boldness, emotional depth and an innovative approach. Despite her critics, Pyotr Tchaikovsky wrote the following about Smyth's music in 1888: "Miss Smyth... can seriously [be considered] to be achieving something valuable in the field of musical creation."

In the 1890s, things began to improve, and Smyth's stubborn persistence in the face of gender bias began to pay off. Her composition *Serenade*, an orchestra work in four movements, was played at a concert at the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, South London. Her *Mass in D* was performed by the Royal Choral Society at the Royal Albert Hall on January 18, 1893. Her first opera, *Fantasio*, was premiered in Weimar, Germany, and her second opera, *Der Wald*, was produced in Berlin and Covenant Garden in



1902. With the staging of *Der Wald* in New York City in 1903, she became the first woman composer to have an opera produced by the Metropolitan Opera.

Smyth showed a gift for the composition of large works and vocal compositions, and her mastery in orchestration is further evidenced in her *Double Concerto for Violin and Horn* (1927). In an era when groundbreaking operas by Richard Wagner dominated the musical world, it is not entirely surprising that she directed her talents towards opera. Between 1892 and 1925, Smyth wrote six operas, all of which reached the stage, an extraordinary feat for any composer. Curiously, the work she most struggled to have produced,



Dame Ethel Smyth, 1922

"... even if I were to fall desperately in love with Brahms and he were to propose to me, I should say no!"

The Wreckers (1904), might well be her most acclaimed opera. It is set in a coastal village in Cornwall where the residents earn a living by plundering shipwrecks, using false beacons to lure ships onto the rocks. Mark and Thirza, a star-crossed couple who are caught when trying to thwart these activities, are chained together in a sea cave, left to be drowned by the incoming tide. The opera explores themes of morality and social issues. The famed English conductor Sir Thomas Beecham, best known for his longtime leadership of both the London Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic orchestras,

offered this observation of Smyth: "... Ethyl Smyth, wearing mannish tweeds and an assertively cocked felt hat, had been striding around Europe, cigar in mouth, trying to sell her opera, *The Wreckers*, to timorous or stubborn impresarios." In 1906, she succeeded, and the opera, considered one of her most successful works, brought her recognition.

In 1910, Smyth heard Emmeline Pankhurst, a leader in women's suffrage, address a group at the home of writer Anna Brassey. Almost immediately, Smyth joined as a member of the Women's Social and

Political Union and became an activist in the fight for women's right to vote. She took a two-year break from her composing career to further devote herself to the cause of women's suffrage, and her deepening friendship with Emmeline Pankhurst became a driving force in her life. In 1911, the song she wrote for the cause, *The March of the Women*, became an anthem, inspiring countless women to become active. It was first performed on January 21, 1911, to welcome the release of suffragettes who had been imprisoned since a protest in November of 1910. In March of 1912, at 54 years of age, Smyth participated in a window-smashing campaign intended to draw further attention to the plight of women. Smyth and Emmeline Pankhurst targeted Lewis Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary, who had made

disparaging comments against the voting campaign. The two women broke the windows of his office at the Houses of Parliament, for which they were promptly arrested and sent to Holloway Prison.

Smyth was visited frequently in prison by Sir Thomas Beecham, who reported that on one such visit, the prison warden brought him into the prison quadrangle, where he observed "... a dozen ladies, marching up and down, singing hard. Ethel was leaning out of a window, conducting with a toothbrush with immense vigor and joining in the chorus of her own song." After two months, Smyth was released early from her sentence, while Pankhurst, who had begun a hunger strike, fell gravely ill. Although Pankhurst was released to recover, she was still weakened when she was re-arrested in May of 1913.

In 1913, Smyth, then in her 50s, began to go deaf, and would ultimately lose all hearing by the end of her life. Frustrated by the impairment, Smyth turned to writing. She wrote ten books in all and became a best-selling author, writing many brilliant portraits of notable people of the day including Johannes Brahms, Queen Victoria, Emmeline Pankhurst and others. Her time in prison was documented in her book *Female Pipings in Eden*. Her autobiography, *Streaks of Life*, was published in 1921. Between 1919 and 1940, she wrote another multi-volume autobiography, *Impressions That Remained*.

Her writings are unusually frank about her own life and personal relations, and through her candor we learned of her varied romantic involvements with both men and women, a remarkably unusual acknowledgement at the time. Smyth



Statue of Dame Ethel Smyth, by sculptor Christine Charlesworth, in the composer's hometown of Woking, in Surrey, England, unveiled in March of 2022.

had many female lovers and was open about documenting her feelings, writing to a male friend, "It is so much easier for me, and I believe a great many English women, to love my own sex more passionately than yours."

Throughout her life, Smyth maintained her independence, and in an early letter to her mother wrote, "even if I were to fall desperately in love with Brahms and he were to propose to me, I should say no!" Her only long-term involvement with a man was with her librettist, Henry Bennet Brewster, a relationship that

lasted from 1884 until his death in 1908. At the age of 71, Smyth met and fell in love with the writer Virginia Woolf, who was then 25 years her junior. In a diary, Smyth wrote, "I don't think I have ever cred for anyone more profoundly" while in contrast, Woolf wrote, "An old woman has fallen in love with me. It's like being caught by a giant crab." Nevertheless, the two embarked on a powerful friendship which endured until Woolf's death in 1941.

Despite her public rejection of societal norms of the time, in

1922 she was knighted as a Commander of the British Empire, becoming Dame Ethel Smyth, for her contributions in composition and literature. Smyth died at her home in Woking, Surrey, England on May 9, 1944, at the age of 86 and with her passing, seemed to vanish from history. The last decade, however, has seen a resurgence of interest in her life and her works.

On September 22, 2018, her home in Woking finally received a blue plaque, commemorating her life in that small town outside of London. A statue of Smyth, baton in hand, was unveiled in Woking on March 8, 2022. Her opera, *The Wreckers* received its first full staging in North America at Bard College in the summer of 2015, and the original French version of that opera was presented at the Glyndebourne Opera Festival in the Summer of 2022, followed by a semi-staged version at the Proms. In the fall of 2022, the Houston Grand Opera presented performances of *The Wreckers*, a first for a major American opera company. Smyth's final work, *The Prison*, a choral symphony with a text by Henry Brewster, was co-premiered in 2018 by the Cecilia Chorus and the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra, and following the premiere, the work was recorded for the first time and released in 2022, receiving a Grammy for Best Classical Vocal Solo. We hope you will take the time to listen to some of Smyth's music using the links provided below. It is in this way that Smyth's place in music can be preserved. 

If you're interested in learning more about Dame Ethel Smyth, we suggest the following:

Enjoy this recording of the first movement of Smyth's cello concerto: [Dame Ethel Mary Smyth: Cello Sonata No.2 1st Movement - YouTube](#).

Smyth's Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra may be enjoyed here: [Ethel Smyth: Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra \(1927\)](#).

Her work *March of the Women* is performed by the Glasgow University Chapel Choir: [March of the Women \(Ethel Smyth\)](#).

Enjoy this recording of *The Prison* written in 1930: [Ethel Smyth – The Prison](#).

Enjoy this recording of the overture from *The Wreckers*: [Smyth, Ethel \(1858-1944\) - Wreckers Overture](#)

The Glyndebourne Opera, performed *The Wreckers* in honor of International Women's Day in 2022, and this excellent conversation provides more insight into the composer: [An Introduction to Ethel Smyth: "A born fighter and a rebel"](#)

The Sixth Movement of the *Mass in D* performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra may be heard here: [Ethel Smyth – Mass in D \(1891\): 6. Gloria \(Oramo 2019\)](#).

In 1927, Smyth gave a talk on her recollections about Johannes Brahms for the BBC, which may be heard here: [Dame Ethel Smyth \(1858-1944\) -- Recollections of Johannes Brahms](#).

Consider watching this brief video about Ethel Smyth to learn more: [DONNE | Women in Music | ETHEL SMYTH \(1858 - 1944\)](#).

A brief documentary of Ethel Smyth may be enjoyed here: [Ethel Smyth:](#)

[Suffragette & Composer | Edwardian History Documentary](#).

Enjoy this discussion about Ethel Smyth, explaining the production of her opera *The Prison* by the Cecilia Chorus of New York at Carnegie Hall in 2018: [May 11 in Carnegie Hall: The New York Premiere of Dame Ethel Smyth's THE PRISON \(A Mini-Documentary\)](#).

A short video about the "insane life" of Ethel Smyth may be watched at this link: [The Insane Life of Ethel Smyth](#).

Source Materials:

[Biography | DAME ETHEL SMYTH \(1858-1944\)](#)

[Dame Ethel Smyth | Women's Rights, Suffrage & Opera | Britannica](#)

[Ethel Smyth: Composer & Suffragette | London Museum](#)

[Smyth, Ethel \(1858–1944\) | Encyclopedia.com](#)

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MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT

Elizabeth McCormack

HSO Principal Flute

HSO's newest member is our Principal Flute, Elizabeth McCormack. She took the audition in September of 2025, and after a trial of two finalists, Elizabeth won the job in February of 2026! We are so delighted to introduce her to all of you.

QN: Tell us where you grew up and a little about your family.

I grew up in Needham, Massachusetts, which is just outside of Boston. Both of my parents valued music. My mom (a gastroenterologist) had played piano as a child and my dad (who works in re-insurance) studied jazz saxophone at the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford. My older sister Caroline and I both began in music at a young age. I was about four when I began playing piano, and my sister got her start on violin. Both of us were involved in music programs that employed the Suzuki method of instruction, which is designed to teach music "as a language" to children from a very young age. As I got a little older, I wanted to try an instrument that was more portable. My dad had both a flute

and a clarinet in the house, and after I saw a TV show that featured a beatboxer on flute, my decision was made. Thankfully, my dad helped me experiment on the flute, but when I was 10, I started lessons

Symphony Hall in Boston as the "doctor in the house" when she was in medical residency. Music was an important part of our childhood and remains so in our lives.

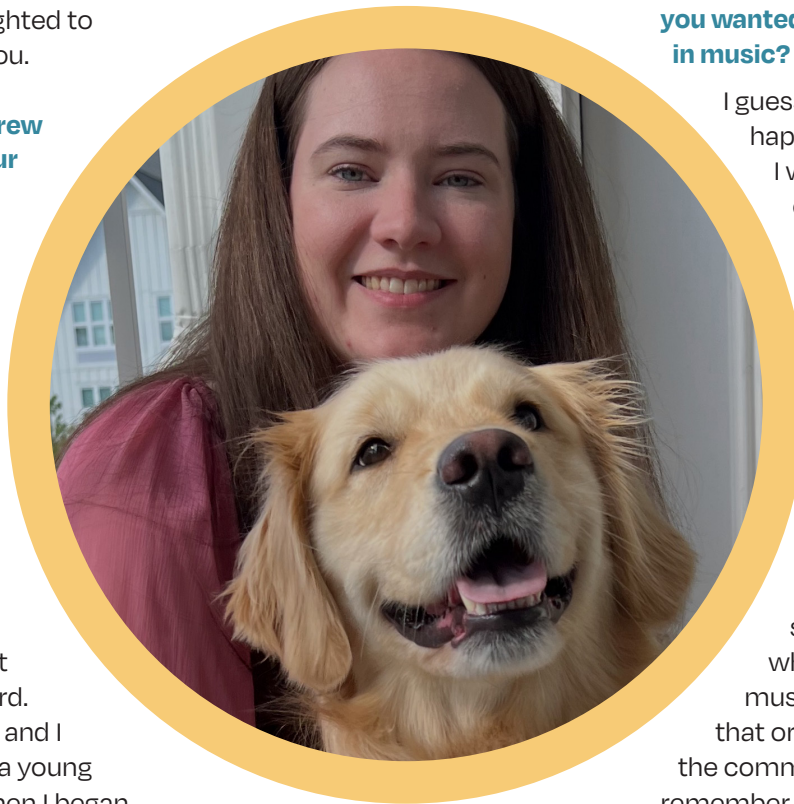
QN: When did you decide that you wanted to pursue a career in music?

I guess that moment happened in high school.

I was in a local youth orchestra and attended orchestra camp during the summer. I just fell in love with the sound of the orchestra. I remember that we were rehearsing Dvořák's 8th Symphony, and I was incredibly moved by the music. I loved being surrounded by people who, like me, valued the music and loved creating that orchestral sound, and the community of musicians. I remember thinking I just wanted to be a part of that world.

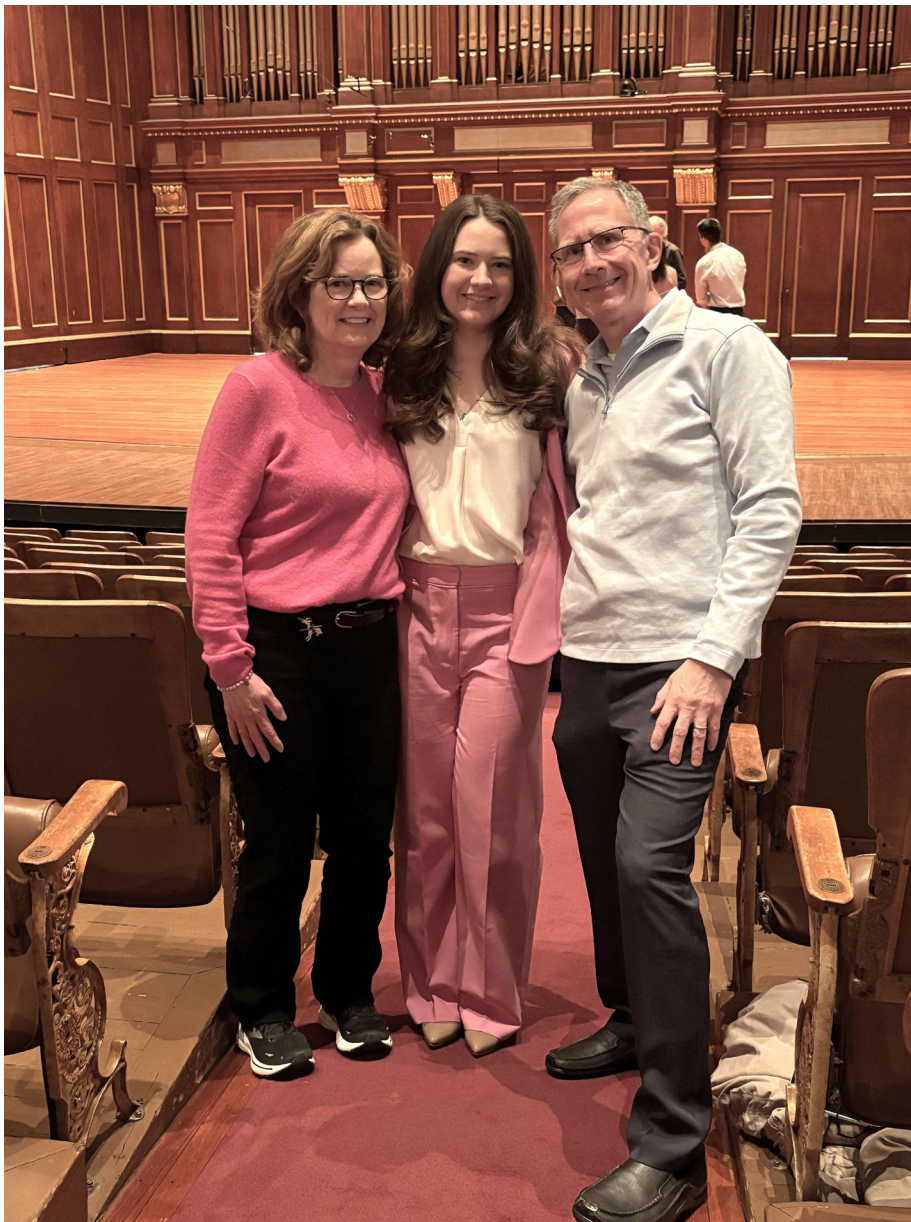
QN: Where did you study after high school?

I attended the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University as an undergraduate and studied with John Thorne. I was a double major, in both flute performance and international studies. I



Elizabeth and Ginger, her family's 3-year old golden retriever, who she adores!

at the Boston Flute Academy. My sister and I were lucky to be in a great school system that valued music. In fact, the principal of our school ran the school choir. My mom regularly got tickets to



Elizabeth with her parents

was always interested in the interdisciplinary aspect of music, and how different cultures and historical events impact music. I wanted to learn more about history and world cultures so international studies was a great fit. I went to graduate school at the New England Conservatory (NEC) in Boston, and I studied with Cynthia Meyers, who is the piccoloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

QN: Help us understand the role music has in your life.

Music is not just my career; it is a way for me to contribute to my community. I have always been moved to connect more deeply with people, and I am especially interested in the ways that music moves people. After graduate school, I was lucky to win an audition for the New World Symphony

Orchestra in Miami. Notably, I was involved in a concert that highlighted neurodivergent artists and composers. It was an incredible experience. I also love programs that bring music to children and others in the community, so I am excited to be part of those programs at the Hartford Symphony.

QN: What can you tell us about your hobbies and other interests?

I love cooking. I'm interested in exploring global flavors in my cooking and I'm so excited to be in Hartford which has such a diverse community. I'm also trying to start baking more. My mother has started making macaroons from scratch and my plan is to learn more about that from her. I recently started working with watercolors, and I also love reading, especially historical fiction and non-fiction. Since my grandfather was a history teacher, that makes sense!

I grew up trying every sport. I played soccer, lacrosse and basketball. I participated in swimming, water polo and took figure skating lessons. I loved the team aspect of sports, and I think I was drawn to orchestra in part because of that team component.

QN: If you were not involved in music, is there another career you would consider?

I think I would have been drawn to the medical field, given my mom's work as a doctor and my dad's prior work in hospital administration. Or, I would have looked to find some way to be an advocate for the community, and for the rights of those who lack the platform or the voice to speak. Another option would be to work with animals. We have always had pets and my parents have

a three-year-old Golden Retriever named Ginger who I adore!

QN: What about your sister? Is she still in music?

My sister played the violin in college, though she no longer plays in an orchestra. She attended Boston College as an undergraduate and studied Political Science and English. She has since gone to law school and is a practicing attorney in Connecticut. Because she is living and working nearby, I am excited to see her more frequently.

QN: What music is in your playlist?

That's a tough one since I love so many different types of music. For classical music, I love Mozart and Brahms, and I really enjoy solo piano works and chamber music. But my music tastes also include Pink Martini and Talking Heads! (Thanks, mom.). I would encourage everyone to listen to the music of Laufey, a classically trained musician who started as a cello soloist with the Iceland Symphony when she was 15. She's now a jazz/pop vocalist.

QN: What's something surprising about you?

I have a deep love of bagels. Seriously, bagels are one of my favorite foods. I even wound up working at a bagel store (Café Fresh) when I attended NEC. Even though the job did not afford me much down time between my shifts, school and practice, it was rewarding. My boss was wonderful and wholly supportive of my music career.

QN: What are some of your great musical memories so far?

I remember going to the Bach Festival Leipzig with the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra when I was still in high school, which was an incredible experience. In 2024, I was a fellow at the



Elizabeth with her parents and sister.

Tanglewood Music Center. Thanks to that, in the summer of 2025 I was invited to join the Festival Orchestra for the Shostakovich Festival, which was also in Leipzig, Germany. The Festival Orchestra included fellows from the Tanglewood class of 2024 and musicians from the Mendelssohn Academy in Leipzig.

From 2024 to 2026, I was part of the New World Symphony. John Thorne, my teacher from Northwestern, was also a New World fellow, so I was very proud and honored to be able to win a spot in that orchestra. And in 2022, when I was still a graduate student at NEC, I played with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra as a substitute, when Dominique Kim was the principal. I was able to meet the flute section and many of the orchestra members. I am so honored to now be the principal flute with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. I could not be more excited! 



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