1974

2024

WXXI Cla5sical 50th



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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF 91.5 FM

FM 91.5 from 1974 to 2024



Throughout 2024 WXXI-FM 91.5 celebrated its 50th anniversary, having signed on the air on December 23, 1974. As Program Director and having been a part of WXXI in various capacities since 1982, I wanted to find a way to telescope 50 years of memories, events, celebrations, personalities, and experiences with our listeners and members. After all, it is you, the listener that is the reason for what WXXI Classical does every day for all of these years.

But where to begin? I started by delving into the archives of photos stored in boxes in the attic of WXXI. Immediately the memories began to flow. There was far too much to put into chronological order, so I decided to write monthly highlights of things that happened and personalities that hosted or managed our work through the years.

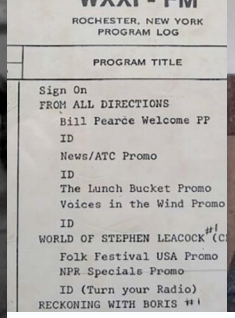
What you have in your hands today is a print compilation of those monthly stories. Some months contained additional videos and links to events, which you can still find available on our website.

I hope you will enjoy these reflections and memories of some of the events, celebrations, honors, and personalities that made WXXI Public Media what it is today. Thank you for your support in making this happen. Keep listening!! The best may be yet to come.

- Ruth Phinney, *Program Director*



1


WXXI - FM
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
PROGRAM LOG

PROGRAM TITLE

Sign On
FROM ALL DIRECTIONS
Bill Pearce Welcome PP
ID
News/ATC Promo
ID
The Lunch Bucket Promo
Voices in the Wind Promo
ID
WORLD OF STEPHEN LEACOCK #1 (C
Folk Festival USA Promo
NPR Specials Promo
ID (Turn your Radio)
RECKONING WITH BORIS #1


2


3

December

When WXXI-FM 91.5 signed on the air on December 23, 1974, the schedule represented a mixed format of eclectic music, news, and talk programming. It had been just seven years since then-President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 (Nov), dedicating a portion of the radio spectrum "to the people."

Many of the programs we know today hadn't even been imagined, but would soon become staples of public radio. *All Things Considered* (1971), *A Prairie Home Companion* (1974), *With Heart and Voice* (1975), and *Morning Edition* (1979) all became flagship programs of public radio. In 1976 WXXI FM 91.5 began broadcasting *Philharmonic Preview*, a series of short features with RPO guest artists. In 1977, WXXI began airing complete concerts from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. The photo above from December 1987 shows the announcement of Jerzy Semkov's appointment as Interim Conductor of the RPO. (**Photo 1:** Tony Dechario, RPO General Manager, Alan Bunin, RPO broadcast host, and William Pearce, President of WXXI.)

Most listeners will remember the two hosts that book-ended the broadcast day for more than 30 years: Simon Pontin and Mordecai Lipshutz (d. 2014). (**Photo 2**)

Simon's Super Scintillating Sunshine Show started with "the birds" each morning at 6:00am. When Simon retired in 2009 listeners overwhelmingly requested that Classical 91.5 continue "the birds" which we still do today. And his Saturday program, *Salmagundy* was an eclectic mix of whatever was to strike Simon's fancy on a Saturday morning. One such favorite was "Yet Another Partridge in a Pear Tree" in which Cynthia Bracegirdle gets far more than she bargained for at Christmas.

Mordecai Lipshutz fondly referred to as "Mordecai in your motorcar," loved his waltzes, dogs, big cars, cigars, fine wines and *The New York Times*, and he could often be heard shouting "Bravo" from the balcony at the Eastman Theatre.

Through his career Mordecai also hosted *Toast and Jamboree*, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra broadcasts, and *Live from Hochstei*n. Hochstein's annual *A Cup of Good Cheer* often featured "MordeClaus" in his stocking hat, reading Christmas stories or leading the live audience in singing carols.

WXXI Classical 91.5 has grown and changed significantly through the years. Thanks to listener and member support, you have allowed music directors David Glerum, Lauri Dishman, Carl Pultz, Julia Figueras **(Photo 3),** and Mona Seghatoleslami to grow our classical CD library, representing music from the early Renaissance to music being composed today.

In the 20-teens, orchestras were under fire for the lack of representation of women and Blacks both in the orchestras themselves, and in the repertoire being presented. WXXI Classical saw the opportunity to take active measures to promote diversity and inclusion and immediately began seeking out, purchasing, and presenting recordings by and featuring musicians of underrepresented groups. Today our library includes selections by musicians, conductors and composers who are: women, of Black/African heritage, Latino/a/x heritage, Pacific Islander heritage, Asian heritage, Middle-Eastern heritage, Native/Indigenous heritage, and from LGBTQ+ and disabled communities.


4

All of WXXI Classical's hosts "live the brand" and embrace inclusion and our commitment to local and regional musicians. WXXI Classical has partnered with ensembles and performing arts festivals in the Finger Lakes and Upstate New York to present an annual broadcast series of concerts called *Performance Upstate,* hosted and produced by Brenda Tremblay. This series began as a way to keep regional performing arts organizations in front of the eyes and ears of their patrons during the COVID 19 pandemic when audiences could not gather for concerts. Some of the ensembles and organizations included are: Concentus Women's Choir, Cordancia Chamber Orchestra, the Empire Film and Media Ensemble, ESM, Finger Lakes Opera, First Inversion, fivebyfive, Madrigalia, Musica Spei, Nazareth, Pegasus Early Music, Penfield Symphony, Publick Musick, Rochester Oratorio Society, the Society for Chamber Music, VOICES, and several music festivals including: Geneva, Gateways, Chamberfest Canandaigua, Glimmerglass and Skaneateles. The ensembles have been so grateful for WXXI Classical's commitment to sharing their concerts, that the series has continued every year. Your support is what makes these partrnerships possible, and what makes WXXI Classical so special.

To secure this music for the next 50 years, WXXI Classical has launched a huge project to secure and digitize the collection which you helped us grow. This is a monumental task that is being spearheaded by Music Director Mona Seghatoleslami with the help of our hosts, several interns, and a part-time library technician **(Photo 4)** whose position is being funded by a local donor.

Although completion of the project will probably take another two years, you are already beginning to hear digital audio files being shared on air, reducing our dependency upon aging CD players.





Famous Visitors

This month we remember famous visitors to WXXI Classical 91.5, and a celebration of City's Best of Rochester awards. As we celebrate 50 years of WXXI-FM 91.5, we reflect on some of the famous composers, conductors and celebrities that have visited our studios through the years. There are many, many more, but here are just a few memories from our archives.

In 1975, *Adventures in Good Music* host Karl Haas visited the station and sat down with Simon Pontin. For years *AIGM,* known for providing listeners with introductory lessons about classical music, aired every weekday at 10am. One of the most asked questions from our listeners was, "what is the theme music for *Adventures in Good Music?"* The theme music was the second movement from Beethoven's "Pathétique" Sonata No. 8, which originally was performed live by Haas for each program. Long-time listeners will remember that he started every show with his trademark greeting "Hello everyone."

In December 1975, beloved public television French Chef Julia Child **(Photo 4)** visited WXXI for a special event. Here she is chatting with Simon Pontin about how she became television's first and most beloved star chef. Her mellifluous voice, natural and often humorous instructions, along with her love of wine and butter, made audiences fall in love with her. Each episode of the 10-year series generally ended with her sitting at the table with a glass of wine and the episode's culinary creation, signing off with her signature phrase, "Bon appétit."

It was October 1976 when American composer, conductor, educator and champion of American Music Howard Hanson **(Photo 3)** visited WXXI. Here we see him casually chatting with then Radio Manager David Dial. Howard Hanson, who served 40 years as the director of the Eastman School of Music until his retirement in 1964, then became director of a newly created Institute of American Music at the University of Rochester. The Institute was established to continue Dr. Hanson's tradition for promoting the understanding and appreciation of American music through performance, publication, and recording.

In June 1987 American composer Philip Glass (**Photo 1**) came to the WXXI studios. Here we see him in the control room with the late WXXI overnight host Alan Bunin, who had an affinity for Glass' music, and any new music. I was the radio secretary at the time and Glass' 1982 composition Koyaanisqatsi ("a Hopi Indian word meaning, life out of balance") was very new to the classical music scene. Alan played the work on his program and the phones rang off the hook with listeners wondering if our LP (we played vinyl back then) was skipping. Over the past 40 years many of our listener's "ears" have changed, and today Koyaanisqatsi receives calls from people loving the work.

Acclaimed Hollywood actor Christopher Plummer **(Photo 2)** visited WXXI twice through the years. Here we see him in the early 2000s with WXXI Classical host Mordecai Lipshutz. Plummer didn't like the film that made him a legend. He was an actor's actor who had cut his teeth doing Shakespeare and he thought *The Sound of Music* was too sentimental. Then, like a personal curse, it would go on to become a universally beloved classic. Although Plummer retained some of that charming arrogance to the end, he was also a man capable of evolving. "As cynical as I always was about *The Sound of Music,*" Plummer said in a *Vanity Fair* interview, "I do respect that it is a bit of relief from all the gunfire and car chases you see these days. It's sort of wonderfully, old-fashionedly universal."

It was September 1982 when *City Newspaper's* (as it was then called) Best of Rochester list named WXXI-FM the Best Radio Station, along with *A Prairie Home Companion* (that aired Saturday evenings) as the Best Folk Music Program, and the Best Locally Produced Radio Show for a tie between *Simon Pontin's Super Scintillating Sunshine Show,* Will Moyle's *Essence of Jazz,* and local news program *For the Record*.







In February, we look at some of the people and things we love about WXXI Classical through the years. It was February 1986 that WXXI launched the series, *Eastman Brass* **(Photo 2)** produced by WXXI's own Barbara Walters, our Special Projects Producer **(Photo 1)**.



February

In February 2009 WXXI hosted the first *Pipedreams Live!* event with Michael Barone. We presented three concerts over four days in different churches, to standing room only crowds at each. Michael said he had never seen a community that was so committed to organ music, leading him to return to Rochester for more *Pipedreams Live!* concert events in 2016 and 2023.

February also saw the hiring of these friends: Steve Chwiecko ('75, now an Energy consultant); Mark Boardman ('87, now Editor of *The Tombstone Epitaph*, AZ); Steve Staruch ('88, now a host on *Your Classical MPR*); Chris Wienk ('88, now Radio VP at WMHT/WEXT).

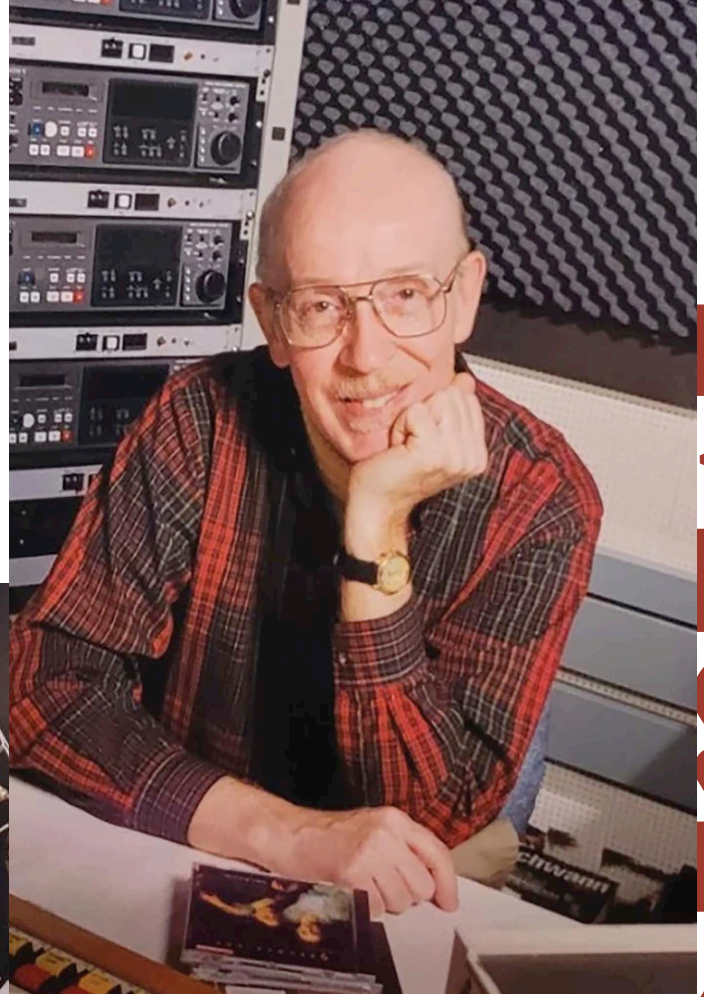
Through the years you, our faithful listeners, have shared your "Love letters" with WXXI, saying things like, thank you for...

- Curating great music every day
- Being a great partner to Rochester's arts community and local musicians
- Providing the soundtrack that takes me to and from work every day
- Bringing the RPO to listeners for all these years
- Taking us to concerts all around the world over the air
- Bringing context to the music you present…I learn something new every day
- Providing companionship during COVID, and every day
- Being a trusted friend
- Inspiring young musicians
- Introducing us to music and musicians I wouldn't know otherwise
- Broadening my ears to hear, and learn to love, new sounds and new voices
- Tickets you offer to local concerts – I have had so many wonderful experiences

And WXXI Classical thanks YOU for continuing to listen, love and support Classical public radio!

March

On Thursday, March 29, 1979 your Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of then Maestro David Zinman (1974-1985) **(Photo 2)** performed "an interesting, well-chosen program designed to showcase its newly acquired qualities" *(New York Times)* at Carnegie Hall.



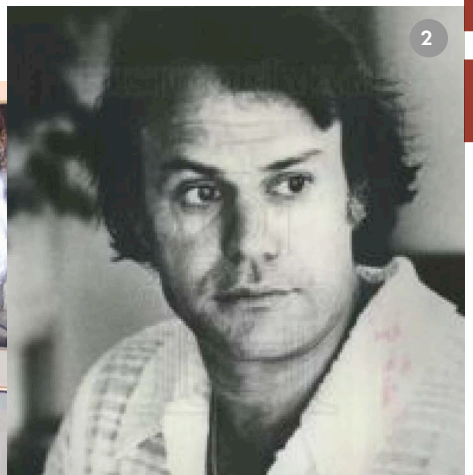


The orchestra performed "two virtuoso orchestral scores; Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini" Overture and Bartok's "Miraculous Mandarin" Suite" and was also joined by noted pianist Misha Dichter. WXXI-FM 91.5 broadcast this concert live to air.

In March of 1978 Alan Bunin joined the staff as the local overnight host; and in 1997 Gil French joined the staff as our midday host, and the producer of the annual RPO broadcasts **(Photo 3).**

In 2014, WXXI FM 91.5 welcomed another renowned musician to Rochester, when flutist Sir James Galway made a visit. Sir Galway performed with local and national musicians at Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre for a live broadcast of the nationally syndicated program *From the Top*, that features talented young musicians **(Photo 1).**





April

It was in April 1991 that Lauri Dishman joined the WXXI Classical staff as midday host and music director, presenting great classical music into 1995. She came to us from KSJR Classical in St. Cloud, MN, part of Minnesota's YOUR Classical network. **(Photo 1:**Pictured here are current morning host Brenda Tremblay (left) with Laurie Dishman (right) from the early 1990s.) We were all just kids back then!

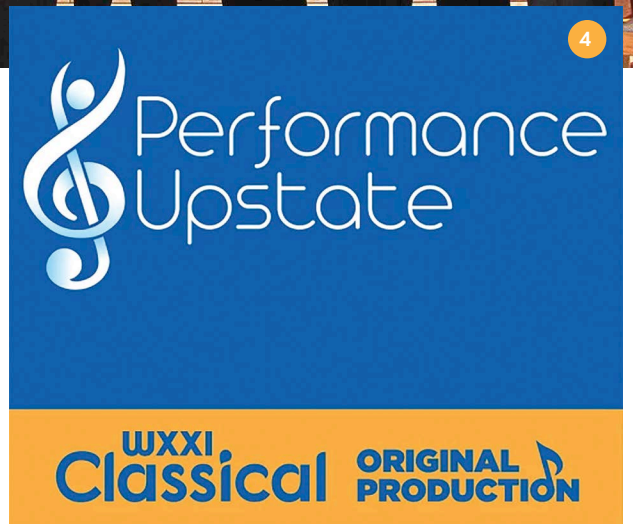


April 21-24, 2016 also saw the second time WXXI presented a three-day-series of concerts throughout Rochester as part of *Pipedreams Live!* with host Michael Barone. WXXI has hosted *Pipedreams Live!* three times; first in 2009, then 2016 and most recently in November 2023. Rochester's faithful organ lovers packed the venues every time, and we are grateful to Eastman School of Music's organ department for partnering with us for each of these events.

(Photo 3) shows host Michael Barone (back row, left) along with the performers, and ESM Professor David Higgs (center front) standing in front of the Halloran-All Saints Organ at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester.

2016 was also the year that WXXI Classical first presented the *Performance Rochester* initiative, sharing concert recordings from ensembles throughout Rochester during April. That pilot initiative has now grown into an annual series of programs called *Performance Upstate* **(Photo 4)**, which includes concert recordings from all across upstate New York and the Finger Lakes region. This series takes listeners into concert halls, sacred spaces, and festivals across Western and Central New York. You'll hear a diverse and colorful array of pieces interpreted by passionate and skillful musicians from Rochester and beyond, along with some of the stories behind the music. Brenda Tremblay is your host. Many concerts are exclusive to WXXI Classical.





May

Tom Bartunek became WXXI-FM's Manager in May 1978, and current WXXI Classical Morning host Brenda Tremblay joined WXXI in 1991 **(Photo 1)**.


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May 1978 also saw a live remote outside the studios on State Street in celebration of *Simon's Super Scintillating Sunshine Show,* "WXXI FM 91.5 Celebrates Sun-Day." In those days, Simon was sporting his signature full beard.

On May 16, 1994 *Fascinatin' Rhythm* host Michael Lasser and Audio Engineer Dave Sluberski made their way to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City to receive a Peabody Award.

Host Michael Lasser (Photo 3), both a broadcaster and a teacher, approaches the past century through an examination of lyrics and musical styles. He lets our treasury of popular tunes speak (and sing) for itself with sparkling commentary tracing the contributions of the composers and performers to American society.

On May 17, 2014 the RPO performed at Carnegie Hall – for the 17th time, but the first in nearly 30 years. One of the highlights of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO)'s 2013-14 season, presented by Dawn & Jacques Lipson, is certainly its concert at Carnegie Hall **(Photo 4)** as part of the prestigious *Spring For Music* festival. One of just six orchestras invited to participate, the RPO presented a concert production of *Merry Mount,* the only opera written by the late Howard Hanson, renowned composer and director of the Eastman School of Music. It was commissioned by and made its highly successful world stage premiere at NYC's Metropolitan Opera in 1934, and still holds the world's record for the most curtain calls—50—at that historic venue.

Just for fun, on May 2, 1993, this cartoon of Simon Pontin in the studio appeared in Mitchell's View of the *Democrat and Chronicle* **(Photo 2).**



2



June

It was June of 1976 when "this fine British gentleman" Simon Pontin joined the staff of WXXI after serving in the mid-60s playing the "real classic hits" at classical WBFB-FM.





Simon was known to always have some gimmick or plan up his sleeve. Like the April Fool's Day broadcast "LIVE from Cobbs Hill Reservoir." However, when WXXI President Bill Pearce went up to the hill, no one was there. The entire thing was a creation of Simon's, done live from the studio, complete with sound effects of water and runners. Then there was "Garbage Day in the Wedge" **(Photo 2).** Simon lived in the South Wedge and on Thursdays he would announce to listeners that it was "Garbage Day in the Wedge." So, it only seemed appropriate that on Thursday, June 26, 1986 Simon would broadcast live from the back of a garbage truck parked in the Wedge.

In June 2009, WXXI Classical launched the first season of Hochstein at High Falls Summer Concert Series, where listeners joined together at the Pont de Rennes bridge for live music. And in June 2021 Michael Lasser broadcast his last *Fascinatin' Rhythm* program, *How Do You Keep the Music Playing?*

Through the 50 years, FM 91.5 had many musical luminaries visit the station; from conductors and composers to actors, politicians and even a famous chef. Here we see overnight host Alan Bunin in the 91.5 control room with composer Philip Glass, June 1987 **(Photo 1).**

In June 2013, WXXI Classical afternoon host Mordecai Lipshutz, known in the community as the booming voice from the balcony of the Eastman Theater, shouting "Bravo" at the end of each RPO Concert, and who traditionally closed the late night jam sessions during the Rochester International Jazz Festival with "We'll Be Together Again," closed for his final time **(Photo 1)**.

July

When WXXI's new Public Broadcasting Center at 280 State Street opened in 1974, WXXI FM 91.5 went on the air as a mixed format station of music of various genres, news, lectures and specialty programs. Some of these you may remember; some you may have forgotten, like *Connoisseur's Corner, Musicale, From All Directions, Parnassus of the Air, Monday evening at the Opera* and NPR's *Folk Festival USA*. Others are still heard today, such as *All Things Considered*.

As public radio was beginning to grow throughout the country, so were the program offerings made available to stations from NPR and other stations & distributors. It soon became apparent that if WXXI wanted to provide the best service to the greater Rochester community, we would need another outlet for these programs.

On July 2, 1984, WXXI launched its second radio station – AM 1370, as a public affairs, news, and music station, making it possible for FM 91.5 to convert to a "mostly" classical music format. There was still a variety of programming, including *Sounds Like Fun, A Prairie Home Companion, Essence of Jazz, Anything Goes* (later *Fascinatin' Rhythm), Adventures in Good Music* with Karl Haas **(Photo 1)** , and the always unpredictable *Sunshine Show,* complete with arts reviews and commentaries.

The very first commentator on Simon Pontin's *Sunshine Show* was that of Homer King, a.k.a. Ollie Oldster **(Photo 2)**, an editorial writer for the *Democrat and Chronicle* for more than 15 years, and radio commentator focusing on subjects of importance to older listeners, even if those subjects were controversial. Then WXXI President and General Manager William Pearce said of King, "He had an editorial writer's lack of fear of things controversial. His pieces would often generate listener response. We all loved him."

Later, the *Sunshine Show* would include commentary and stories such as *A Tale in Two Minutes with Jay Stetzer, What in the World is Music* with Ellen Koskoff, music reviews by David Raymond, film reviews by George Grella, book reviews by Bob Koch, and features on the arts by Isobel Neuberger.

FM 91.5 would soon become a destination for visiting musicians to come to record programs or interviews. WXXI began partnering with the Eastman School of Music, the Hochstein School, and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, even producing and distributing *Eastman in Concert* and *Eastman Brass* to other stations, hosted by special projects producer Barbara Walters.

In recent years, WXXI Classical has partnered with the Gateways Music Festival and many local and regional performing arts organizations. We helped to distribute *Gateways Radio,* a 13-week series of programs to the public radio system, and the live broadcast of the Gateways Music Festival Orchestra performance live from Carnegie Hall in New York City in 2022. Additionally we produced *Performance Upstate,* which kept local ensembles connected to their patrons throughout the pandemic when most live performances were shut down.


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Looking through the archives of WXXI FM 91.5 we find treasured memories of the crazy things that were done in the early days of public radio, when we were all a bit younger and had more hair. Those early days also attracted some big-name visitors to the station.

August



As we've mentioned in previous reflections, WXXI-FM 91.5 began as an eclectic mix of music programming and news in the early days, including *Jazz from the Cellar* and *Mostly Jazz,* hosted by the late Tom Hampson for more than 30 years. Hampson loved jazz from the time he was a teenager, and he kept that passion even after he chose a career in law, specializing in corporate law at Harris Beach. But it was that passion for, and long time advocacy for the Rochester jazz community that endeared him to jazz lovers throughout the community and beyond. In August 1978 Tom hosted "A Conversation with Earl Hines," an American jazz pianist and bandleader, and one of the most influential figures in the development of jazz piano **(Photo 1).**

August 1978 also marked FM 91.5's host Simon Pontin emceeing musicians at the Sterling Renaissance Festival in Sterling, NY. From mud pits, magicians and jousts, to axe throwing and strolling troubadours, Simon introduced many of the musicians and events for visitors to this vintage faire **(Photo 2).**

Simon was always finding opportunities to be involved in the community in unusual ways. Here we see Simon being inducted into the Continental Regiment of the Revolutionary War Brigade in August 1987. Unfortunately, I don't have more information on this "honor," but perhaps someone might lend more to the story **(Photo 3).**

The summer fun continued on August 22, 2017 when WXXI Classical 91.5 hosted its first Flower City Beer Choir Event. This unique event, which took place at Three Heads Brewing brought together beer lovers, singers, and the Flower City Beer Choir Band to celebrate music, singing traditional drinking songs and Bach chorales with new, event-inspired lyrics.

Through the years, FM 91.5 welcomed a number of staff in August. Here's a short list of some names you may remember: Dave Dial, Program Director, 1974-1981; John Ballard, afternoon and RPO host 1980s; Dave Glerum, midday host and Music Director 1986-1990; John Andres, Sunday and fill-in host 1995 to present; Chris Van Hof, afternoon host, 2008-2011 after beginning as an Eastman School of Music ALP intern in 2007.



As we reflect on 50 years of WXXI Classical 91.5, there are two women who quietly but faithfully contributed greatly to WXXI radio. Edith Lank, longtime local and nationally syndicated real estate columnist, regularly shared her knowledge and advice on real estate both on WXXI's talk show, and weekly real estate commentaries on *Simon's Super Scintillating Sunshine Show.*

Two Sisters

When Edith was growing up, there were few career options for women, but Edith created an entire career for herself writing ad copy for her husband's real estate business, and later her own newspaper column, which was carried in more than 100 newspapers nationwide **(Photo 1)**. She often toured the country, speaking about her career and real estate, and eventually wrote (or co-wrote) a number of books on the essentials of real estate for New York and New Jersey buyers and brokers.

Edith was also a lover of the works of Jane Austen and classical music, As a pianist, Edith's sister Esther Vail **(Photo 2 with her husband)** also loved books and music, but preferred operettas, a form of light opera often on humorous themes, that includes spoken dialogue, songs, and dances. Her favorites were by Gilbert and Sullivan; so much so that in 1977 she founded Rochester's Off-Monroe Players named after the neighborhood where it was founded at New Life Presbyterian Church. Their first, assumed "one-time event" was the production of *The Mikado,* but it was soon apparent that this would become an ongoing adventure. In an article about OMP's founder it was said that, "if a group of grassroots amateurs gathering to learn, rehearse, and perform Gilbert & Sullivan could make a valuable contribution to the community's cultural life; and that if we had fun, our audience would, too." It was Esther's intelligence, humor, and goodwill that she brought to everything she did - from her book reviews, to her theater work, and her commentaries and announcing on WXXI FM 91.5 and later AM 1370. And none of us can forget the Rochester blizzard (late 80s/ early 90s) that virtually shut down Rochester, and the night that Esther stayed overnight at the station to keep us on the air. That's just the kind of commitment that both Edith and Esther had for public radio!





October



1

What do you get when you combine the music of Bach, beer, a German Brass Band and a group of fun-loving singers? Bachtoberfest, of course **(Photo 1)**! It was in October 1976 when American composer, conductor, educator and champion of American music, Howard Hanson visited WXXI – a great moment in Classical 91.5's history.


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We have also remembered many of the wild and wacky things FM 91.5 has done through the years, like "Garbage Day" in the Wedge and the April Fool's Day remote from Cobbs Hill Park, that was not a remote at all, but a prank by morning host Simon Pontin that sent then WXXI President Bill Pearce up to Cobbs Hill to search for Simon and the broadcast truck.

It would be some 40+ years later that WXXI Classical 91.5 would do something completely new and different to engage with music lovers, listeners and singers from around the Rochester region. On October 28, 2017 WXXI Classical 91.5 hosted its first Bachtoberfest, Octoberfest with a Bach twist! Hundreds of listeners and singers joined WXXI at Three Heads Brewing for an afternoon of Bach and great beer! There was a sing along with the brass choir in traditional Bach chorales re-worked with new words, classic German brass music by the Oktoberbones, and the Flower City Beer Choir Band for some old-fashioned beer songs. It was a great success and all who attended had a great time. So much so that we did it again in October 2018.

Through the years, FM 91.5 welcomed many great announcers and staff, many who went on to even greater things. We remember the late Tom Teuber (producer & host, late 1970s), Mary Jo Heath (host 1980s & later broadcast host of *The Metropolitan Opera* broadcasts, 2015-2021), Andy Stauffer (host), Andrew Waggoner (host and composer), Mona Seghatoleslami (host & Music Director 2011-today) **(Photo 2)**, Kearstin Piper Brown (host 2015-today, and acclaimed opera soprano, having made her Met Opera debut in *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* in 2024), Dr. Stephen Johnson (host 2019-today, PhD in Musicology, ESM) **(Photo 3)**.


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November

Public radio listeners are very familiar with on-air membership campaigns. In the early days of FM 91.5 no one knew exactly how to do them, or if they would even work. One of the station's first fundraising gimmicks was "The Great Warhorse Orgy" where the station played nothing but classical warhorses from 6:00am to midnight, while asking listeners for their support – and it worked **(Photo 3)**!

Listeners were very responsive, and still are today, which is why we are proud to be celebrating FM 91.5's 50th anniversary.

In the late '70's/early '80's FM 91.5 also hosted a program for children called *Sounds Like Fun,* hosted for 10 years by Eastman School of Music faculty member Mitzi Collins (**Photo 1**). Collins was a nationally and internationally recognized virtuoso player of the hammered dulcimer. Each week children would be invited into the WXXI radio studios to explore and experience a variety of musical genres, including American, folk, world and Celtic music. In 2007 Collins was named the recipient of the 2007 Artist Award for Music by the Arts and Cultural Council for Greater Rochester, an honor recognizing significant contributions to the Greater Rochester cultural community. Collins was also a founder of the Golden Link Folk Singing Society and founder of her own recording label, Sampler Records Ltd. Many of her recordings feature



flutist Glenda Dove and harpist Roxanne Ziegler, as well as a CD called *Sounds Like Fun: Folk Songs, Games And Poems For Children.*

Several classical hosts and managers joined the FM 91.5 staff through the years in the month of November, including Richard Gladwell '74 (more about him in a minute…), Marty Buchsbaum '76, John Proffitt '79, Steve Stonewell '95, Jeanne Fisher '96, and James Aldrich-Moodie '22.

Speaking of Richard Gladwell, pictured in the studio **(Photo 2)** in the early days (notice the LP, turntable and audio console with rotating knobs), a photo of the group that went on the *With Heart and Voice T*our of England (I haven't been able to track down the year), and a late picture of Richard in the updated studios and CDs**.**

British-born with an Anglican background, at age six Richard was accepted as a chorister in an East London Church. He continued to sing in church choirs in the region until his military service 1939-1945. In 1955 Richard came to the United States and worked in management for both Xerox and Eastman Kodak through the years.

Throughout his life he amassed a huge collection of more than 6,000 records and over 4,000 CDs, many of which are still used in the production of *With Heart and Voice,* which he hosted for 30 years. Richard felt a calling to share "God's music," and *With Heart and Voice* allowed him to do just that. In March 2009 he received the Benemerenti medal from Benedict XVI during a special concert in his honor at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester. The medal is one of the Vatican's highest honors to the laity. Richard passed away in October of 2009 but *With Heart and Voice* has continued on WXXI Classical 91.5 FM in his honor and memory.

How can one possibly celebrate all that is good about 50 years of service to the community in one reflection? I have tried to highlight many of the individuals, fun events, memories and projects your friends at WXXI have experienced throughout the years, all in service to you, our faithful listeners. But through it all, the constant has been the MUSIC – 24/7 "classical" music!

That's a Wrap!


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2

Yes, the definition of "classical" has changed through the years, just as our ears have changed the way we hear classical music – through the eyes of our personal experience and the times in which we live.

WXXI kicked off the 50th anniversary celebration in March 2024 with Kearstin Piper Brown and Friends from the Black Student Union in a special concert event at Asbury First United Methodist Church that drew over 700 guests **(Photo 2).** Audiences were treated to music of Mozart, Hailstork, Bach, Saint-Saëns, and Boykin, just weeks before Kearstin made her Metropolitan Opera debut.

On April 8, 2024 WXXI Classical provided a 2½ hour curated playlist of uninterrupted music about light, darkness and the heavens for listeners to enjoy while watching the total Solar Eclipse. Although many of us in the Rochester area were disappointed by the overcast weather, many listeners responded with how much they enjoyed the music that provided the soundtrack for this historic event.

In September 2024 WXXI welcomed Suzanne Bona **(Photo 1),** host and executive producer of *Sunday Baroque,* to our year-long 50th anniversary celebration. Suzanne performed a free concert for nearly 400 guests, featuring works by J.S. Bach, Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, John Rutter and the ever-popular Claude Bolling Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano Trio, with musicians from the Eastman School of Music.


3

Throughout the year "WXXI Classical Presents" hosted five film screenings and discussions at The Little Theatre.

Earlier I stated that the constant through the years has been the MUSIC. But there are three major life events in our history that prompted WXXI Classical to ponder and consider how we present classical music and our mission to serve our listeners.

I will never forget January 28, 1986 when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded 73 seconds after launching from Cape Canaveral, and September 11, 2001 when terrorists hijacked four commercial planes, crashing them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania. In both cases, WXXI staff surrounded TVs, glued to the tragic events that had just happened. WXXI/NPR News on AM 1370 immediately interrupted regular programming to cover the events of the day, and Classical had to decide whether to go to news coverage or maintain the music. In both cases, after a brief switch to events coverage to keep our listeners informed, Classical quickly returned to the comforting and reflective music that listeners needed. The third event was COVID-19, a time when the world shut down and everyone was isolated – really isolated! WXXI Classical knew immediately that our mission couldn't be clearer – keep presenting the music that was so desperately needed to maintain some semblance of normalcy and comfort during such tragic and "unprecedented" times. Despite not knowing how this could work, WXXI Classical hosts continued to come into a virtually empty building, masked and distanced, bringing listeners the classical music they craved, along with that familiar connection and updates from the community.

"Classical music" has changed! It is alive and well with lovers of all ages. The way we hear classical music has changed, and life has changed all of us. WXXI Classical's response to this change has been to grow and evolve to reflect the world in which we live and respond to listeners who are demanding more from their classical public media service. From the heritages and identities of the musicians, to the technology and the platforms upon which we listen, it's all about the music. Good, classical music! The music that you and I love, and the station that we are willing to support to keep it available to everyone.

(**Photo 1**: This is the late conductor Roger Wilhelm, conducting Madrigalia in the WXXI studios, recording custom jingles that Roger wrote in celebration of WXXI Classical's 20th anniversary in 1994.)

Best of Rochester

Continued from page 9

Viewers were reminded that Andrea would return tanned and full of pep on August 6.

Of course, TV 10 stopped airing the promos when Andrea decided she'd rather not be in Rochester after all. Instead, she went directly from Nantucket to Atlanta and the big time. So much for Andrea's warm regards for her loyal viewers.

BEST LOCAL MUSICIAN
BEST LOCAL MUSICAL GROUP

Individual nominations in both categories were so numerous that there was no clear winner in either. Predictably popular: Chuck Mangione, Jeff Tyzik, Gap Mangione, Cabo Frio, the RPO, and the Cleveland Quartet.

artists.

A nod also to Simon Pontin from WXXI who tries gamely to slip some folk music into his morning Sunshine Show. More! More!

BEST RADIO STATION
WXXI-FM

So you don't like commercials. Although practically every radio station (and a few from Buffalo and Toronto) received at least one vote, the lion's share of the votes went to commercial-free stations WXXI and WGMC-FM.

The high quality of WXXI's local programming, such as the "Sunshine Show" and "For the Record," along with popular syndicated shows such as "All Things Considered" and "A Prairie Home Companion" made WXXI a shoo-in.



David Sachter

Getting XXI-FM on the air: seated, Marianne Carberry, operations director, and Simon Pontin, senior producer and Super Scintillating; standing, from left, FM manager John Profitt, music director Mordecai Lipshutz, news producer and reporters Sharon Friedlander and Bud Lowell, and news director Scott Thomas.

But little-known WGMC, FM 90.1 from the town of Greece, was a surprise. This station has smoothed out its format in the past several years and is becoming increasingly popular. The station features adult contemporary music with an emphasis on jazz on weekdays. The weekends feature a long folk music show on Saturday and a smattering of ethnic music shows on Sunday.

BEST RADIO FOLK MUSIC
A Prairie Home Companion

If you haven't discovered this marvelous throwback to the days of live radio entertainment, consider yourself deprived. A Prairie Home Companion is aired live from the World Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota, every Saturday evening from 6-8 p.m. on WXXI-FM. It's a Mulligen stew of musical styles from simple folk singing, to blues instrumentals, to Irish string bands, liberally sprinkled with entertaining takes from Lake Wobegon.

WGMC's delightful folk shows on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m and on Sundays from 10 p.m. to midnight, took second place. WGMC is the only station in the area that gives attention to local folk musicians and often airs live folk shows with local

BEST LOCALLY PRODUCED RADIO SHOW
WXXI

XXI also dominated the voting for Best Locally Produced Radio Show. Votes in that category were too diverse to declare a clear

winner, but the heaviest concent
for Simon Pontin's Super Scintill
shine Show, Will Moyle's jazz sho
the Record, all on XXI.

City Newspaper awards sp
citations to Pontin, Moyle, an
Jasser ("Anything Goes") for a co
of depth of knowledge and on-t
sonality that produces exceptional
and to WCMF's "Homegrown"
munity service.

BEST SUPERMARI
Wegman's Pittsford

Wegman's prides itself on
everything a customer could des
and its Pittsford branch is no exce
of the reasons why readers rated
supermarket. Wegman's also came
our survey for chocolate chip
croissants, and for free food. (Fo
on the prowl, other sure bets are
Gourmandes, Friday's, El Tori
Market, Red Creek, Parkleigh, Ll
Eastman House openings.)

BEST PLACE TO WATCH THE SUNS
Cobbs Hill

What does this mean? That you
think a little hill provides the best p
Lake Ontario is so far away that yo
discovered it?

The lake, which placed sec
course the real best place to wate
and some lake-lovers have their fa
spots: Hamlin Beach, Webster
Charlotte pier, Hedges 9-Mile Poi
Eastman Park, "a small knoll so
tario Parkway, near Latta Road,"
the lake near Long Pond Road.

Other suggestions worth che
footbridge over the river in Gene
Park, a hill in Mt. Hope Cemetery
the Strathallan, and from a New
reader, "The Changing Scene: get
minutes before sunset and revolve

BEST VIEW OF ROCHESTER
The Changing Scene

Unquestionably—unless you're a
few who get motion-sickness fro
turning. Cobbs Hill Park was a cle
Good views also: from the to
Roosevelt Apartments on Oxford
from Hattie's bar (on a clear day, y
Lake Ontario from both), from th
Street Bridge, from tall downtown
and from such entries-to-the-city
I-390, and Browncroft Boule
Ellison Park.

BEST EXAMPLE O
GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY