



# Songcatchers, Inc.

*Reaching for Peace through Music*



August 1, 2020

Greetings from Songcatchers!

We hope you and your families are well and staying cool and safe in this hot summer weather.

Songcatchers is having a busy summer – transitioning back to working in the office, hosting two three-week summer programs, planning a virtual choir camp for August 9 – 15, and registering children for fall classes. All of this is happening while we are observing relevant CDC and NYS guidelines regarding health and safety.

We'd like to acknowledge the **New Rochelle Campership Fund** for providing scholarships to all our New Rochelle children who attended the summer programs in July. What a gift it was to our families! The children loved coming and parents said it was a perfect break after a spring filled with uncertainty and stress

With this summer newsletter, I'd also like to give a HUGE shout-out to ALL our volunteers. **Songcatchers has 130 volunteers** that serve our organization in many different ways – teachers, aides, camp counselors, office helpers, program coordinators . . . and cooks! (Have you ever tasted those delicious empanadas that our moms make for the recitals??) According to Independent Sector, an organization that brings together nonprofits, foundations, and corporate giving programs, the value of volunteer time as of July 2020 is \$27.20 per hour. Donating over 9,000 hours per year, our volunteers save Songcatchers more than \$250,000. I am humbled by the spirit of giving and kindness they display each time they walk through our door. *Please thank a Songcatchers volunteer today!*

You might have seen our **virtual event** on June 3<sup>rd</sup> that paid tribute to the volunteer teachers who graduated from high school and college this year. They are our stars! (You can still watch it by going to: <http://www.songcatchers.org/shine-on-2020.html>.) The event was the result of many volunteers working together, including **Nick Carter** and **Sheila Monahan** who helped with the design and production. They never say “No” to us. *Thanks, Nick & Sheila!*



And did you catch **Balcony Ballads** on NBC News 4, News 12, Lohud, and multiple social media outlets?? **Rosemarie Castellano** started volunteering in 1997 and hasn't stopped yet! Each evening from April 10 to June 12 she was out on her 6<sup>th</sup> floor balcony playing the violin after New Rochelle's 7 PM “Clap Because We Care” campaign. Many happy neighbors and friends gathered on balconies and in the parking lot below to enjoy a delightful respite from the pandemic. The Songcatchers choir joined her from the parking lot on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and sang two songs!

Another long-time volunteer, **Lauren Morrow**, is making us a new website. Stay tuned for an August rollout, and let us know what you think. *Thank you, Lauren!* And thanks to **Kelsey Williams** for helping us get “organized” this summer!

A big THANK YOU goes to **Sharon Parente** for coordinating the Composers of the Future program these past few years. *We couldn't have done it without you!* And to **Monica Balbuena** who taught art with recycled materials. *Thanks, Monica!*

These are just a few of the volunteers that give of their time and talents to Songcatchers. **WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO ALL 130 VOLUNTEERS and TO YOU, OUR DONORS**, for helping to make Songcatchers an organization to be proud of and for helping us to realize our mission of Reaching for Peace through Music.

We wish you a restful and healthy summer.

Blessings, peace and music,

*Your support makes a  
difference in the lives  
of our children!*

Angela M. Belsole  
President, Board of Directors





# Music Notes

Songcatchers Inc.

July 2020

Volume 19, Issue 1

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## CHOIR CAMP

John Dennehy, Director

## Choir Camp 2019: 40 Years of Music

by Kathleen McEntee



From July 28 - August 3, 2019, 70 campers and 40 staff came together to celebrate 40 years of Choir Camp. Just like the first camp in 1980, everyone participated in the usual activities of chorus, drama, arts and crafts, swimming, and family time, along with many more. However, unlike the first camp, the week ended in a 3-hour sing-a-long choral concert and drama production that spanned the 40-year history of Camp. We learned that while many aspects of Camp have changed over

the years -- the people, the location -- the spirit of Camp remains strong and true in each one of us. No matter where we end up, each person who has experienced camp is entrusted to spread the Camp mission of peace and kindness to others wherever we go. Although we will hold a virtual Choir Camp experience in 2020 and will miss being physically present with each other this summer, we are looking forward to reuniting in-person with one another for Choir Camp 2021!

## Choir Camp 2020: A Virtual Experience

by Vanessa Torres

Initial planning and preparation for camp usually happens *during* the preceding camp. Every night, counselors sit together to discuss the things that worked during the day and what needs to be improved for the following year. As an organization, we take these things seriously in order to keep camp going and growing. Never in our wildest dreams could we predict that camp would have to be different this year!

Choir Camp is usually a week full of laughter, reconnecting, and learning from one another atop a beautiful hill surrounded by the beauty of nature. When the camp staff was hit with the sad reality that we would not be able to go to Warwick due to COVID-19, we knew we had to do something to keep the tradition alive.

Choir Camp 2020 is going virtual this year! Although for safety reasons it will not be possible to get together in person, we will gather via Zoom and other online platforms from August 9-15. The staff has been working tirelessly since May to plan a virtual camp experience that will be just as fun as the real experience! Although it will be different from what we are used to, we have come up with ways to still have morning prayer, instruments, sports, quality time, TAPS, and much more. See you on Zoom as we "stream for peace through music"!



**Be on the social media lookout (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) throughout the week of August 9-15 as our campers and staff present several "virtual choir camp selections" online!**

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## The Year in Review: Challenge & Resilience

by Mary Louise Morgan

Our year began in September with the usual flurry of orientation meetings with volunteer teachers and mentors all anticipating the beginning of classes in October. Clemencia smoothly processed the registration of both new and returning students, enabling us to start on a strong note.



On a beautiful October morning, the Choir entertained on the green behind the New Rochelle Library as part of New Rochelle’s ARTSFEST. We followed up with an Instrumental Workshop which attracted new students to our program. The following day, the Choir sang at The United Hebrew Home to the delight of the residents. The end of the month saw our concert series, Music in Our Lives, return to the New Rochelle Library with our very own mentor, Enid Press, performing with “Angels in the Chamber” (left). They charmed our audience with beautiful music and stories regarding the history of their instruments.

In early November, Kathy & Jeff Wiegand hosted José García-León, an internationally acclaimed pianist, at their lovely home. Those who were lucky enough to attend were treated to a memorable concert by a charming and talented musician who also serves as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Julliard.



Songcatchers kicked off the beginning of the holiday season by gracing a float in the New Rochelle Thanksgiving Parade. Many children and parents actively participated in decorating it. In addition to caroling at the City Hall Holiday Lighting ceremony, the highlight of the year was, once again, listening to the Choir perform at the 25th Annual Concert For Peace which was held at Holy Family Church. Under the direction of Kathy Wiegand and accompanied by Ken Farnum, Jr., the Choir delivered a unique holiday gift to the New Rochelle community.

The New Year began with classes resuming and The Cara Quartet entertaining at the second Music in our Lives performance. Amy Hersh, our flute mentor, performed with the group. February marked the eighteenth year that our Composers of the Future program featured original works by Songcatchers children performed by the Symphony of Westchester. FUN FACT: a student of the very first Composers class continues to hear her work performed at David Geffen Hall. Her original composition is used for the bells that signal the end of Intermission for the New York Philharmonic. How wonderful!



And suddenly it was March and everything changed. New Rochelle became the epicenter of the COVID-19 Pandemic. As of March 11th classes and concerts were cancelled. Our Songcatchers Brunch was indefinitely postponed and the traditional Choir Camp experience was cancelled. Songcatchers rallied to meet the moment and began to reach our students using virtual teaching, and the staff worked from home. We reached out to support families who suddenly lost jobs by partnering with HOPE Community Services and the City of New Rochelle to provide food and gift cards.

Since our annual Spirit of Songcatchers Brunch had been cancelled (along with traditional proms and graduations), we decided to celebrate and thank our graduating volunteer teachers. Songcatchers mounted its first virtual event called “Shine On!”. The event was emceed by our very own Rosemarie Castellano, a current Board member and one of our first volunteers in 1997. Seeing the talented young people perform in this virtual concert setting was gratifying and financially successful. You can still watch it at: [Songcatchers.org/shine-on-2020](https://Songcatchers.org/shine-on-2020). **WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS!**



As we move through the summer, we are hosting limited Summer Day Programs and preparing for the Fall. With the continued support of all our friends and families, we will thrive!



**Save the Date! First Day of Classes: Tuesday, September 29**  
*Coming soon: Check our new website for the 2020-2021 calendar and upcoming events.*

**Thank You to Our Individual Donors!**

Songcatchers wishes to thank *all* our donors for their generous support throughout the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The following individuals have given major donations (\$500+) through June 30, 2020:  
 Alan Ascher, Alex & Kristofer Bayha, Tracy O'Neill Begley, Angela & Mike Belsole,  
 Barbara Birshstein & Howard Steinman, Karenann & Emmet Carty, Rosemarie Castellano, David Dowd,  
 Dianne Flagello, Getz Obstfeld & Francine Gerace, Rosemarie & Tony Goncalves, Tandy Guinn, Lynne Lippincott,  
 Geri Lizzo, John McCarthy, Michael & Sheila Regan, Gwendoline Smith, Patricia Strelbel, Cecilia Roddy & Pete Vlaco,  
 Ronan & Martine Wicks,

**Thank You to Our Supporters!**

The collage features logos for the following organizations: The Ursuline School, Fordham University, New Rochelle (Ideally Yours), URCS, NRCCS, Junior League of Pelham, The Louis R. Cappelli Foundation Inc., The Dean Witter Foundation, HOPE Community Services, New Rochelle Public Library, Arts Westchester, New Rochelle Chamber Music Festival Fund, D'Addario Foundation, Brophy & Phillips Co., Inc., Tutti Bravi Productions, WDI Workforce Development Institute, Orange Bank & Trust Company, Jodie, National Guild for Community Arts Education, The Laura B. Vogler Foundation, Volunteer New York, The Symphony of Westchester, Peckham Industries, Inc., Nonprofit Westchester, Henry E. Niles Foundation, Inc., Chamber of Commerce, PNC Foundation, and Silts Family Foundation.

**Do YOU or someone you know have a news item to announce?**

**News Corner**

**If so, let us know!**  
 Email: [songcatchers@gmail.com](mailto:songcatchers@gmail.com)

**Congratulations to:**

- ♪ Kathleen McEntee on her engagement to Brian Lawlor and upcoming wedding in October 2020.
- ♪ Vanessa Torres on her engagement to Joe Antolino and upcoming wedding in September 2021.
- ♪ Lyndsay DeMatteo on the completion of her Masters of Science in Nursing degree at Yale University in May 2020. Lyndsay, a longtime Choir Camp staff member, is now a certified Adult/Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner and will begin her Nurse Practitioner fellowship in Yale, specializing in geriatrics.
- ♪ All of our Senior Class of 2020 volunteers!

**Condolences to:**

- ♪ Eddie Hilser and family on the death of his father, Eugene, in July 2020.
- ♪ Kathleen McEntee and family on the death of her grandmother, Rose Boniello, in June 2020.
- ♪ Kenneth Farnum Jr. and family on the death of his father, Kenneth Farnum Sr., in April 2020.
- ♪ The McMahan Family on the death of their wife and mother, Helen, in April 2020.
- ♪ Emerick Falta and his family on the death of their mother, Emmy Falta, in April 2020.
- ♪ The Teodoro Chavez Family on the deaths of their grandmother and aunt in spring 2020.
- ♪ Clemencia Castañeda and family on the death of her brother-in-law, Alberto Borrero, in February 2020.

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*Reaching for Peace through Music*



## STATEMENT OF UNITY AND PEACE

**The mission of Songcatchers is "Reaching for Peace through Music".**

**We want to affirm that we recognize the heartbreaking and devastating effects of racism and inequity that are playing out in our country.**

**We stand together with our local community against exclusion, bias, structural and systemic racism, and prejudice in all forms.**

**Together, we find power and joy in working collaboratively to reach for common understanding, and strive to make a more just and peaceful world through music.**

**SONGCATCHERS INC.**  
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