



WINDHAM REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL ARTSPECTRUM

Volume #65 Issue #1 Winter 2024

Promoting the arts in Windham and surrounding regions.

Message from the President

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WRAC Board Members

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Priyeshni Perera

Scott Rhoades

Sara Rogers / Dan Thomacos

Linda Tracy

Michelle Welles

Lorraine Williams



Photo by Brian Cohen

I would like to start this message with a belated Happy New Year to all! It was only this week (the final week in January) that I turned off the lights that decorated the bushes outside my house. To me, there is something that represents hope when I leave those lights on one month beyond the holidays. Some people regard January as a cruel month. My sister Mary's birthday is in early January, and she never liked it. When

asked why, she said, "everyone is tired, broke and on a diet!" True enough.

Now that January is behind us, we can look forward to a hopeful new year. Worried about the weather, the cost of living, war and politics? We have the antidote for all of that. Allow WRAC to bring you comfort, as we have for the past 40 years. Please look through this issue and you will see the results and photos of the 37th annual Young Artists Music Competition, held on December 3.

Read about the great work our community partners are doing to bring opportunities for artists and performers. Observe the work our members do to bring arts appreciation to our youth and senior citizens.

Finally, I would like to thank you, our members, for your steadfast support. I also extend my thanks to our board of directors for the work they do throughout the year. Together, as an organization, we keep our "lights" on for all to see!

Cathy Shires, WRAC President

WRAC Receives Grant Funding



We are very grateful to the Prue Law Group and administrators of the Leo & Rose Pageau Trust for its recognition of the work we do to bring arts experiences to local youth.

In December 2023, WRAC received \$4,000.00 from the trust to supplement the school trips / education fund. We invite educators in grades K – 12 from Windham and surrounding towns to reach out to us for funding for trips to museums, performances and other arts-related destinations.

Are You Good with Numbers?

The Windham Regional Arts Council is seeking a dependable person to fill a vacancy on the board in the role of Treasurer. The candidate must be computer-literate, preferably with experience in bookkeeping or managing budgets. A stipend of \$100 per month will be paid, with a training period if necessary. This is an ASAP start date. Appointment to the position will be in accordance with the organizational bylaws.

Interested persons should message us via email contactus@windhamrac.org or call Cathy at (860) 423-1728.



OUR ARTISTS on WRAC Website

Greetings WRAC members!

Tom Hurlbut here, board member and WRAC webmaster-in-progress. Happy New Year to you all! Winter is a good time for me to update the WRAC website. The page "Our Artists" is a great place for your listing as an artist, visual, music, writer, or otherwise and I would love to include you! Currently, this is offered to our members free of charge.

Send me an email at Tom@THPstudio.com and include the following: **Your Name / Email / Website or other link / Phone (if desired) / Brief description / Image file (if applicable)**

I look forward to adding member artists to our website! If you have questions, please let me know.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Windham Concert Band Returns!



We are pleased to announce the return of the Windham Concert Band to the Shaboo Stage on Friday, June 28, 2024 at 6:30 PM. WRAC is pleased to be the sponsor of this free, family-friendly concert. The concert band, currently under the direction of Kay Niemasik, has had a presence as Windham's

own community band since 1858. Guests should bring a lawn chair or blanket, a snack or take-out supper to enjoy 90 minutes of patriotic and Broadway favorites, as well as contemporary and international tunes.

Don't miss this traditional "kick-off" to summer in our community!

Photo by Tom Hurlbut


WILLIMANTIC ORCHESTRA

Scott Chaurette, Music Director and Conductor

presents


Sunday, March 3, 2024 at 3:00 PM

Note Concert Location
Windham Middle School

 **Water Reflections** - Yukiko Nishimura
Concerto No. 2 in D minor - Wienaski
2023 WRAC YAC Winner - *Dustin Rood*
Enigma Variations - Elgar

Sunday, May 19, 2024 at 3:00 PM

at ESCU Fine Arts Instructional Center

 **Collaboration with Consonare Choirs**
Illuminare - Elaine Hagenberg
Selections from "Carmina Burana"
- Carl Orff

Save the dates to enjoy an afternoon of music!!

Valentine Project



In partnership with the Willimantic Public Library, WRAC artists contribute their time and skills for projects at the Windham Senior Center.

Under the guidance by Johanna Reilly, participants constructed three-dimensional Valentine candy dispensers from card stock layers.

Special thanks to Maria Chaparro-Morales for her assistance and Spanish interpreting.

If you have a special skill to share with these wonderful senior citizens, please contact Maria via email mchaparro-morales@biblio.org or by calling the library at (860) 465-3079.

In Memoriam - Ed DiGiovanni

We are very saddened at the passing of Ed DiGiovanni, a longtime member of the WRAC Board of Directors, who passed away on November 13, 2023. Ed's contributions to music education in the Windham region are immeasurable.

As noted in his obituary, the positive impact he had on this world can't be measured, and his lasting impression will never die. A native of Waterbury CT, Ed enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. After serving four years in the military, Ed resumed his love for piano studies and enrolled at UConn, where he earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in piano performance. He was a music educator and band director at Kramer Middle School in Windham for over 30 years. For some of the students, pronunciation of his name was challenging, so for decades, he was simply called "Mr. D."

Ed's contributions to WRAC include his tireless work for many years on the Young Artists Music Competition committee. Ed always pulled through for any student who needed a piano accompanist, often at "the last minute". His beautiful accompaniment put the competitor at ease, resulting in a more beautiful performance.

Ed's support to WRAC didn't end when the music competition closed. He could always be seen at the annual art show receptions, chatting with guests and admiring the artwork. He was always happy to host a board meeting at his beautiful home in Columbia. Since Italian finger foods, hospitality and good red wine was always served, no board member wanted to miss the meeting at Ed's house.

On December 2, a Celebration of Life took place in Ed's memory at a fully filled First Church of Christ in Mansfield. Musical performances were interspersed with heartwarming tributes by Ed's friends and relatives. Many of the musicians were Ed's former students who continued the musical practice he inspired in their adult lives.

We are very grateful to Ed's wife Cathie Rowe and their family, who have directed donations in Ed's memory to the WRAC Young Artists Music Competition. After consultation with Cathie, it was decided that memorial contributions will fund a special scholarship for a deserving student in grades 7 -9 for excellence in piano or band instrumental performance.

We thank Ed's family for putting their trust in us to carry on Ed's memory. We welcome further contributions to the "Mr. D" scholarship.

Please send a donation in any amount to: Windham Regional Arts Council
P.O. Box 847
Willimantic CT 06226

Please note on the check or enclose a note that your contribution is for the Ed DiGiovanni scholarship.



*Photo by
Dick Sallee*

Windham Hospital Corridor Gallery

Upcoming shows at the Windham Hospital Gallery will feature:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| February thru March: | Lori Smolin - watercolors |
| April: | W.R.A.C. group show -
<i>What Does Peace Look Like?</i> |
| May: | Lorraine DuBois - photography |



Note: A new procedure has been implemented whereby the artist will be notified when a piece of art has been sold, giving the artist the option to replace the sold art with another for the duration of their exhibit.

We do have the month of July open for any artist or artists who would like to exhibit their work (solo or shared). Please contact Micky Welles at (860) 617-3855

2023 Young Artists Music Competition Winners

Grades 7-9:

Piano:

1st
Chloe Song



2nd
Avin Perera



Wind/Strings:

1st
Raha Esmaili Zaghi

Grades 10-12:

Vocal:

1st:
Shane Gilluly



Instrumental

1st:
Dustin Rood



2nd
Andrew
Grzywacz

2nd:
Gunnar Hofmann



3rd
Yagnasenee Das



Special Prizes:

Bellingham Piano prize: Avin Perrera

McDevitt Voice prize: Shane Gilluly

Edward Gerry/Catherine Wade String Prize: Dustin Rood

Edward Gerry/Catherine Wade Wind Prize: Raha Esmaili Zaghi

Feather Spearman Honor: Sholka Nathan

Grand Prize: Dustin Rood

Feather Spearman Honoree



Shloka Nathan

Photos by Tom Hurlbut



The Windham Regional Arts Council proudly announces the 2023 Grand Prize Winner of the Young Artists Music Competition.....

Dustin Rood

This year's competition was held on December 3, 2023.
Dustin beautifully performed Concerto No.2 in D minor, Opus 22, 1st movement
Composed by Henry Wieniaski (1835-1880) on violin.

This past January, I had the wonderful opportunity to talk with Dustin, an ambitious and talented young man. He is a multi-instrumentalist who began to study the violin at age 4. He was taught by Gabriel Remillard. Since 2021, Dustin has been studying under Samantha Drake. By the time he reached middle school, in his words, "it became my passion!"

In the fifth grade, Dustin also began to study piano. In middle school, he joined the concert band. And in the summer between 5th and 6th grade, while visiting family in Taiwan, Dustin began to play the erhu (a two-stringed guitar).

From grades 6-12, Dustin has been a participant in the All State Eastern Regional and the New England Music Association music festivals.

Dustin enjoys playing music from the Baroque to the Contemporary eras. He particularly loves music from the Russian Romantic era. His favorite composers include Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, and Beethoven.

Dustin is planning to pursue a career in music. His dream job would be to play with a large symphony orchestra.

Dustin has competed in the Young Artists Music Competition since the 6th grade. All of us who have been a part of the competition have enjoyed listening to him play each year on different instruments as we watched him grow and develop as a musician and a young man. As a competitor, his unbridled passion and expression, zeal and enthusiasm has brought him numerous awards each year.

As the grand prize competition winner, Dustin has been invited to perform a solo with the Willimantic Orchestra. He will be playing his award-winning piece Concerto No. 2 in D minor. The performance will be on Sunday, March 3, 2024 at 3:00 pm at the Windham Middle School.

Dustin, we are so proud of you! We wish you all the best as you graduate from EO Smith High School in June and begin to pursue your future endeavors.

Submitted by Carol Twardowski-Heap on behalf of the Young Artists Music Competition Committee

WRAC Welcomes New Board Members



Greg Gryzwacz - After enjoying WRAC's Young Artists Music Competition in which my oldest son participated as a vocalist for the second year in a row, I was thanking WRAC's VP Carol Twardowski-Heap for organizing the event. That conversation ultimately led to my interest in serving on WRAC's board and the competition committee. As I've learned more about WRAC and the competition, I've discovered there's a wonderful harmony with my interests and skills. For my entire adulthood, I realized, I've been involved in the arts in the Windham area so this feels like a calling.

As a lifelong trumpet and cornet player, it started in college at ECSU where I played in the college/community concert band, and continued doing so for years after graduation. It's there I met my wife Carrie (a flutist), and also proposed to her on stage during a concert some years later! We also played for many years in the Windham Concert Band during the summers, and it turns out WRAC sponsors their annual performance in Willimantic. I currently play in the Charter Oak Brass Band, Connecticut's premier British-Style Brass Band which occasionally performs in the area and many members are music educators (with whom I now look forward to discussing the competition).

Professionally, I am a director at a marketing research consultancy which is a fit for my perpetual curiosity and I suspect my survey and interview skills may come in handy for the WRAC board. I have three children for whom my wife and I take pride in supporting their natural attraction to the arts, and ironically, we often find ourselves in Willimantic for their endeavors. My oldest son is a junior at ACT performing arts magnet high school on Main Street in Willimantic and is an aspiring lighting designer. He is a studious vocalist, being a UCONN Jorgensen Joy Conservatory scholarship recipient and he also sings with ECSU's choir and select chamber singers in addition to ACT's choir and select choir groups. My middle son in 8th grade is also a vocalist and quite the culinary artist, and my daughter in 6th grade is an artist and never far from her sketch pad.

I am also a photographer and when feeling especially creative I aim to capture images in camera that look like impressionist pastel paintings using ICM—intentional camera movement. Art has given so much to me; I'm enthused to support an organization that facilitates the joy of art for so many others.



Linda Tracy is originally from Willimantic and resides in Storrs. She earned a B.S. in Music Education with a concentration in voice from the University of Connecticut and an M.S. in Music Education from Central Connecticut State University. She is a retired music teacher, having taught choral music in the Windham and Tolland public school systems for 34 years. She was also very active as musical director and choral director for several years for the Windham Theatre Guild in Willimantic, having directed their Adult Broadway Chorus and Classic Chorale, and could be found directing the pit in many of their musical productions. She was also the creator and director of the Capitol Theatre Summer Chorus in Willimantic for many years. She is the creator and artistic director of the Mansfield Center-based a cappella ensemble, *Take Note!*, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary.

Since retiring from teaching in 2018, Linda has dabbled in the world of instrumental music, learning to play the trombone and violin, and performing in the Windham Concert Band and the Northeast CT Community Orchestra, and in March, she will take over as the conductor of the NCCO, based in Ashford. Linda has also tapped into her love of the visual arts, becoming a pastel artist and has had her artwork displayed in many WRAC art shows. She is now a published illustrator, having her paintings featured in the book, *"A Pagan's Path to Meditation: 10 Meditations for Yoga and Nature Lovers."*

Linda has been a judge for the WRAC Music Competition for several years and looks forward to working as a board member for the WRAC.

WRAC invites you to join or renew your membership and receive the ArtSpectrum

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (H/C) _____ Email: _____

Membership Categories (circle one): New / Renewal

(check one) \$15 (individual) ___ \$20 (Family) ___ \$100 (Group) ___ Date _____

Your area of artistic skill (circle one): Visual Art / Music / Writing / Drama / Dance

Your Donation helps WRAC continue to promote the ARTS in the Windham and surrounding regions. If you wish to help promote the ARTS further, please consider enhancing your membership to one of the following levels:

(check one) Benefactor \$100 ___ Patron \$50 ___ Donor \$30 ___

**Please make checks payable to the Windham Regional Arts Council (WRAC) and mail to
P.O.Box 847, Willimantic, CT 06226**

A4A
ASSETS FOR ARTISTS



CULTURAL COALITION
serving southeastern & northeastern CT

Connecticut artist
Dylan DeWitt@dylanjdewitt



Image credit: @carolina.picante

Assets for Artists + Artists U

Attention Eastern Connecticut Artists!

Are you looking to engage in deeper conversation and expand your vision for what your best creative life could look like?

Do you want to build community with other artists while building a sustainable future for your practice?

Learn more about this unique accelerator for artists of all disciplines, at all career stages.

Friday April 5, 2024 | 6pm - 8pm

Saturday April 6, 2024 | 10am - 5p

Eastern CT State University, Willimantic

FREE. Space is limited.

Interested artists should submit a brief interest form by February 15, 2024.

Visit **Cultural Coalition SE & NE CT** - Scroll down to Coalition News **Artists U in Northeast CT this Spring** to find the form.



The **WINDHAM THEATRE GUILD** has a busy schedule of plays and events!
We need **VOLUNTEERS** to help bring the magic to life in almost every area!

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED!

Just a love of Theatre and a willingness to be a part of something magical. If you can use a power drill, sew, shop, run a computer, paint, clean, carry, decorate, there's always something new to do!

**Tuesday, FEBRUARY 13TH : 6:30 PM
at the Burton Leavitt Theatre**

Learn more about our Tech Opportunities from the experts at our Tech Tuesday!

You are invited to stay and watch the Steel Magnolias pickup rehearsal at 7 p.m.

**For more details, and to be added to our contact list visit:
www.windhamtheatreguild.org**

**Questions?
Contact us at (860) 423-2245 or
wtgvolunteer@gmail.com**



P.O. Box 847
Willimantic, CT 06226



Has your membership expired?



Any member who would like to receive the ArtSpectrum (in color) via email please send your request to Contactus@windhamrac.org

Mansfield Juried Art Show

The Mansfield Arts Advisory Committee announced the return of the annual juried art show, on exhibit from

**March 15 – May 15 at the
Mansfield Community Center.**

An article in the Willimantic Chronicle noted that the entries for the exhibition is open to all artists, age 18 and over, currently residing in Mansfield, Ashford, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Tolland, Willington and Windham.

Only two-dimensional work will be accepted. The work must be properly wired, framed and ready to hang.

After a selection process, there will be prizes awarded for first, second and third prizes, plus a "People's Choice" award determined by votes from community center visitors.

Application forms and submission instructions can be found on:

mansfieldcc.com Click on the "News" icon at the bottom of the page.

Questions about the show can be emailed to **artsadvisory@mansfieldct.org**

CONCERT
To support
the **Parish House Roof Project**
of The First Church of Christ in Mansfield

**Sunday, March 10, 2024
3:00 p.m.**

**The First Church of Christ
in Mansfield**

549 Storrs Road
(Rt. 195 at Rt. 89)
Mansfield Center, CT
myfcc.info

Donations gratefully accepted at the door

Take Note!
a cappella ensemble
take-note.org



The Windham Regional Arts Council (WRAC) was founded in 1983 to help organize community arts activities for the 150th birthday of the city of Willimantic. The Council is a non-profit volunteer organization with over 250 members. The ArtSpectrum is published three times a year and highlights events and people actively involved in the arts community.

The organization financially supports the Willimantic Orchestra and the Burton Levitt Theater. It sponsors an annual art show for member artists. April, August and December feature a group show at the Windham Hospital Corridor Gallery. Members have the opportunity to exhibit their work at the Windham Hospital Corridor Gallery. Each year the WRAC holds a juried music competition for students aged twelve to eighteen and the overall winner performs a solo at the Willimantic Orchestra's spring concert.

We welcome new members and creative ideas to promote the arts in Windham and surrounding regions.