

WMC President Joyce Seibert's Remarks:
"Music in the Museum" at The Fralin, April 15, 2018

Welcome at 6:30 p.m.

Good evening friends! My name is Joyce Seibert and I have the privilege of serving as President of Wednesday Music Club during this momentous year of our 95th anniversary.

Thank you for coming to our 95th birthday party for Wednesday Music Club! Your presence adds to our celebration, an anniversary certainly worthy of marking in this wonderful way.

I hope you have enjoyed the first part of our gathering at The Fralin, browsing the exhibits, and enjoying some refreshments.

Before I get into my remarks I want to recognize some of our long-term members.

- If you have been a member for 25 years or more would you please stand? Anyone who has been a member for 30 or more years? (Corky Sablinsky joined in 1970; Barbara Moore in___)
- If you are a past president of WMC Club would you please stand so we can recognize you?
- Now, I'd like to acknowledge our current Board and all Committee Chairs—these are our leaders who represent tens of other WMC volunteers who are currently carrying the Wednesday Music Club baton so carefully passed from generation to generation, from 1923 to today.

Let's roll back the years to the 1920's, the time of WMC's birth!

The 1920's came in with a roar with great political and social change in our country.

For the first time more Americans lived in cities than on farms--there was great migration occurring in our nation.

The economy more than doubled in the decade.

The first commercial radio station, KDKA Pittsburgh hit the airwaves and mass public culture in the US began to develop coast to coast.

We started to have national advertising and chain stores.

The most important consumer product of the 20's was the automobile. By 1930 cars were practically necessities and an entire automobile economy was springing up.

The car enabled people to go places and the young wanted to go where they could dance—the Charleston, the cake walk, the black bottom, the flea hop. I

t was a time of great jazz! Jazz bands played at dance halls in all the big cities; radio stations and phonograph records carried tunes to listeners across the nation.

And, of course, we know that the 1920's brought Prohibition!

Two weeks after New Year's, at midnight on January 16, 1920, the feds closed every tavern, bar and saloon in the United States. Prohibition and its offspring, the illegal Speakeasies, roiled American life with bootleggers, racketeers and essentially the Mob bosses.

Prohibition wasn't the only source of social unease in the 20's. There was the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to Northern cities and the increasing visibility of black culture—jazz and blues music, for example.

There was friction between the old-fashioned values of small townies and the new city slickers. The KKK increased its membership.

There was an anti-Communist "Red Scare" in 1919 and 1920 bringing about near anti-immigrant hysteria.

Women's lives particularly began to change dramatically in the 20's—and not just with the invention of the washing machine and vacuum cleaner. The 19th Amendment to our Constitution was ratified in August, 1920 giving women the right to vote.

And, we all know that the most familiar symbol of the decade was the 'flapper'—the young woman with bobbed hair and short skirt, a cigarette in one hand and a drink in the other.

Big breath...well, it was into this tumultuous decade that our dear Wednesday Music Club was born!

Eight young women in Charlottesville, Virginia began to meet in 1923. They were music lovers and enjoyed performing for one another. They eventually invited others to join them and chose Wednesday as the day they would meet.

Well, we all know how the 1920's ended—in a financial crash which ushered in the great depression of the 30's. But, no crash and depression for WMC! It flourished! Growing by 1930 to 57 members paying dues of \$1.25. In the 40's we had 130 members and now today, we're 165 strong with still very modest dues of \$30 a year.

Sad for us we know little of our earliest years since only the barest records were kept in the first 10 years. We do know that by 1930 the Wednesday Music Club had the support of many groups in the city—Rotary, Kiwanis, Young Woman's Business & Professional Club, Young Men's Business Club--all contributed funds for "Music Week" in January 1930. Also, by 1930 music lovers who were not necessarily musicians were invited to join. That completely dispels the myth that WMC has been only for musicians!

Community outreach began pretty early. WMC helped raise money for a piano for the new Lane HS, bought a Victrola for the Coast Guard, looked into assisting the Kiwanis with putting music in the public schools—that had to be shelved until the 1950's when, after much effort WMC, was finally successful in placing a stringed instrument program in the 3 Charlottesville elementary schools. By the end of 1953 we were still entirely responsible for the program. We paid the teachers, bought, maintained, and insured the instruments of various sizes. We also sponsored and directed children's concerts and helped with the Tuesday Evening Concert Series each year. By our 30th birthday we were an active, vital club, which had made a real place for itself in the community.

By 1955 our long-term project of orienting a stringed instrument program in the city and county schools came to a successful conclusion—the city and county both funded strings on the same basis as band.

Now, WMC could put more emphasis on scholarship and other outreach programs. Of course, in the midst of all the outreach WMC continued its tradition of exceptional musical programs for its members and provided ways for members to also enjoy making music together true to the spirit of our founders.

In the 1980's we started our annual Competition where students ages 10—18 compete for music camp scholarships and other monetary prizes in virtually every instrument and, now, composition category. For families struggling to pay for private music lessons, our Tuition Scholarship Programs helps up to about 55% of the cost. These programs have been of core value—really heart value--to WMC over the years. Our fundraising was geared to being able to fund these endeavors.

Decade after decade, dedicated WMC Boards and Committee Chairs supported by faithful members generously continued to support and carry on the mission of the Club, both for its members and for our community—with an emphasis on young people.

Then, just a few years ago, WMC was the beneficiary of a transformational gift—a bequest from one of our longtime members, Robert W. Smith, Jr. This generous gift has allowed the Club to enlarge its mission impact in a variety of ways—numerically, financially, and geographically.

We have added 3 annual university scholarships, Charlottesville Symphony player scholarships, and awards to Distinguished High School Senior Musicians. Further, our Grants Committee is heading into their third cycle this year. This year we awarded over \$23,000 in grants to music programs in 7 different communities.

Our newest initiative is our partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Central Virginia for an after-school music program. This brings a new demographic for WMC and our pilot which is still in progress has opened a new world to us. We're helping beginning instrumentalists--5th grade boys and girls—helping them with their assignments and encouraging them to persevere and not give up! We also have 3 other programs going at the Boys & Girls Club on Cherry Avenue. Our pilot with the Boys & Girls Club began almost exactly one month after the tumultuous events of August 12 in Charlottesville last year. Little did we know that WMC would be contributing something to bridge an invisible barrier in our community. We know that music transcends all divides—it brings beauty, dignity, and joy to every person and enriches the life of every community.

Plus, there's more on the horizon for WMC! Our Strategic Planning Task Force is looking at many aspects of our Club—both existing programs and possibilities for the future. We want to be good stewards of the heritage passed to us and relay it to an even more worthy legacy for the future.

So, what does one do at age 95? The usual is to look back over the years, celebrate, and enjoy the growth and accomplishments? We've done some of this tonight. But what about resting, specifically resting on those laurels I described. That's not for this group!

While we celebrate the past, we are all about making the most of the present with a bead on the future:

--being good stewards of all that is entrusted to us and

--carefully adding value as we pass the baton to future WMC leadership.

Our VISION:

To foster and sustain a vibrant music climate throughout Central Virginia, especially among young people.

Thank you again for being here to celebrate this tremendous milestone for Wednesday Music Club—95 years and going strong! We have more planned yet this evening including a very special musical program.

Before we continue, I want to thank our 95th Committee who are responsible for this evening:

Lynne Bair, Chair, Elizabeth Phillips, Annie Sartori, and Cecily Winchell.

And a special thanks to our Underwriters, Sponsors, and Friends who helped to fund our party today.

I also want to recognize Charlie Burns who furnished the spectacular flower arrangements for us; and our in-house photographer, Miriam Carratt, who captures our special memories with her expert photo shots.

Lynne, will you please come and introduce our music program?