



UP front

*I got married. Which, for almost 20 years, was not an opening sentence to this column that I expected I would write. But I'm very glad I did – both have the occasion to and actually – write it.*

I'm not a kid. Coming to this place at this point in my life is both unexpected and amazing, in the best ways. It feels good and right. The path here has not been linear; rather, it resembles a Pollock print. But once we agreed on our destiny, we sprinted together to the finish line...which is more like a start line, in newlywed eyes.

The wedding was New Year's Eve eve. The "kids" were home for the holidays – our logistical prompt. The promise of renewal rinses everyone's spirits as the waning year finishes its run. I was eerily calm. I did the Saturday Times crossword. I made my version of white bean soup. I showered and dressed in 30 minutes, one of the benefits for being a groom rather than a bride.

Our friend and photographer, Claire Barrett, took pictures in the mid-afternoon light. My favorite reveals my girls in the background as we walked from one location to another, both smiling brightly, chatting about something other than what we were doing at that moment, oblivious to the camera, accompanied by fine young gentlemen, conspicuously content.

It's an amazing thing: Family. Your concept of it evolves. Life mandates flexibility. People join it. People are born into it. People are taken from it. Its importance intensifies as your remaining time with it shortens with each passing day. You don't have a say as to the one in which you are initially placed, but you choose what you learn from it, how you honor it, and how you add to it over the years. The choice I have made is a great one. It's the right one. It's the one that I want to carry me to the end.

I met my wife after seeing her three days in a row in three very different parts of town. On the third day, I surrendered to fate, or my interpretation of it, and I penned a hand-written note and wedged it between the wiper and windshield of her car. Miraculously, she responded. It's not as simple as this next sentence implies, but: Here we are.

She works with me on this magazine now. And everything else I do, in some way or another. It feels like

a true team of two, for which I am more grateful than I can convey with words.

It's a new year. A new beginning. I hope yours is magical. Make it so.

*Scott A. Lauretti*



## SAVANNAH PHILHARMONIC

**2024 is here! Excitement and possibility are in the air, as is the sound of music.**

At the Savannah Philharmonic, we optimistically welcome this new year. And, as we move forward toward our next season, it brings us great joy and pride to reflect on the events of the past year, and to fully appreciate the musical milestones we have all shared together with our incredible Savannah community.

Looking back, we are pleased to share that our annual Phil the Park event in Forsyth drew an astounding 25,000 attendees this year with the theme of "Around the World" – dedicated to celebrating the global rhythms of Savannah and the vibrant culture that makes this region so special.

Our Phil the Neighborhoods series connected us with new friends and neighbors across the communities of Gordonston, Burnside Island, and Thunderbolt. We look forward to visiting Tanger Outlets, Chippewa Square, and Victory Heights in April.

In addition to our successful events, we are pleased to share that we added two members to our orchestra family— Principal Cello, Daniel Mumm, and Principal Bass, Olivia Salas, both exceptionally talented musicians who have already added another layer of dedication and depth to our fold.

Further, we expanded our all-volunteer Chorus to over 80 talented members, and auditions will be taking place throughout the season if you are interested in joining. Please note, the Chorus will be singing Lord Nelson Mass and Verdi's Requiem this spring and we hope you can attend.

Our free music education programs continue to thrive through our SavPhil Strings program, with nearly 50

students studying violin throughout Chatham County. Very soon we will welcome 5,000 students from schools across the region to our 5th Grade Concert at the Johnny Mercer Theatre, which is designed especially for them to learn about the elements of an orchestra and how they play together.

Recent highlights from the season include welcoming renowned violinist/conductor Julian Rachlin for a sold-out concert, featuring Piazzolla's The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. And, we presented two performances of our Holiday Stories of Savannah concert, featuring the Eric Jones Trio and other guest artists at the Lucas Theatre for the Arts.

We are elated to soon present our sold-out Beatles Classical Mystery Tour concert, followed by the romantic classic Romeo and Juliet, and then later closing our 15th-anniversary season in celebration with Gershwin's beloved Rhapsody in Blue at 100!

We look forward to announcing our exciting 24/25 Season in February and we are pleased to share the lineup truly reflects our mission of offering something for everyone to enjoy.

With heartfelt appreciation, we thank you all for helping us to reach new heights in artistic expression and community engagement. We look forward to sharing many milestones with you in the years to come and we wish you and yours a fantastic New Year!

**Give the gift of music today!**

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