



Spring 2025 Newsletter

Happy Spring!

We have just a few rehearsals before our May 4th concert, where we'll introduce Rafael Reyes-Worman as our new Music Director, and Caleb Hathaway as our newest Associate Conductor.

Pieces we'll perform include Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, Alfven's *Midsommarvaka*, Kuczynski's *Dovetail Overture*, Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, and our Guest Conductor, Toru Tagawa, will conduct Vivaldi's *Concerto for Two Cellos*, played by two students:



Max Tagawa 7th gr



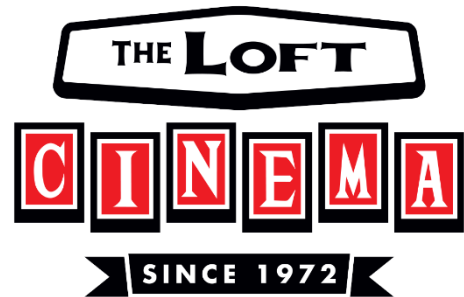
Jude McGrath 8th gr

General admission tickets are \$10 each. They can be purchased at the door using cash, check, or PayPal, or can be purchased in advance at:

<https://www.zeffy.com/ticketing/spring-2025-concert>

Concert: Sunday, 05/04/25, 2:30pm, Catalina High Magnet School, 3645 E. Pima Street.

Come early! – we'll have live music in the lobby, including a new composition by the winner of the 2024 Laszlo and Fran Veres Young Composer's Competition, Ryoto Brumitt, called *Waver Tango*, and *Star Wars* by John Williams (1:45p– 2:15p).



Building community by celebrating the art and diversity of film.

In the lobby before the concert and during intermission, we'll be selling \$5 raffle tickets for a Couple's Membership, at The Loft Cinema (worth \$150) *The drawing will take place on stage, just after intermission.*

Jim Click 2025 Millions for Tucson Raffle tickets for sale in the lobby.

In addition to our membership dues, we rely on advertisers, donors, and volunteers, to continue providing life-enriching experiences to our members and the community.

Further donations can be made in the Lobby on May 4th at the ticket table. Donations can also be made at any time here:

\$25-\$299 <https://www.zeffy.com/donation-form/65db22f4-4088-4b07-8ea6-0b94c771ad97>

\$300+ <https://www.zeffy.com/donation-form/e8494f19-3ceb-415a-b5a1-6ab7d0b3e5a5>

To volunteer, please email us at phil@foothillsphiltucson.com

Charlotte Raby,

Executive Director/Chair

The Foothills Philharmonic, Inc. is a 501c3 nonprofit.

Committee Reports

Jim Click Fundraiser

The Jim Click Fundraiser supports nonprofit organizations in southern Arizona. All tickets and prizes are donated by Jim Click, with no participation costs to the nonprofits. Each nonprofit organization keeps every dollar they make from their ticket sales.

So far this year, we've brought in over \$900 to help support our 501c3. The tickets are \$25 each or 5 for \$100.

Members may sign out groups of tickets to sell to family, friends, and co-workers. Tickets are also for sale on our website and at rehearsals.

The prizes this year:

Grand prize: New 2025 Kia Carnival Hybrid SX Prestige.

2nd Prize: Two Round Trip, First Class Airline Tickets to Anywhere in the World.

3rd Prize: \$5,000 Cash

Thank you, Shari Hofstadter and Becca Bommersbach!

Social Media and Administrative

We now have our social media team up and running! Right now, we're focused on Instagram. Follow us and share!

<https://www.instagram.com/foothillsphiltucson/>

Thank you, Crystell Ballesteros!

We also now have administrative help with our music library, flyers, and other printed materials. Thanks go to Becca Bommersbach!

Member Interviews

Following are two interviews with legacy members - Dave Ricci and Stephen Salajko have lived fascinating lives!

Interview with Steve Salajko By Glen Daw

The interview felt like a skit from a Monty Python movie:

"So Stephen how long have you played the bagpipes"

"I don't play the bagpipes, I play the Clarinet."

"So aside from the Clarinet, how long do you practice the bagpipes each day (you know, the 100 day practice challenge)?"

"As I told you, I don't play the bagpipes, I play the Clarinet, a woodwind instrument."

"So are you saying that bagpipes are woodwind instruments?"

[somewhat heatedly] "I don't play the bagpipes."

"Well yes, you did mention that, and in what clef is bagpipe music?"

At which point the interview ended, Stephen stomped off, and I had to make up the rest....

Breathe
(Quick Reset for
Overwhelm)

Tap your collarbone
point while saying:
I am safe. I release
this overwhelm.
Continue tapping as
you breathe deeply.
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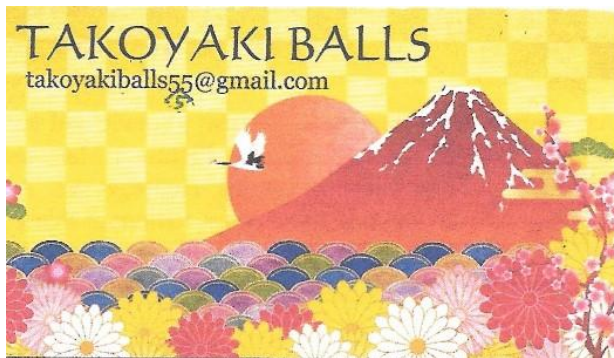
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Stephen grew up in a close-knit Slovenian community in Girard, OH, just north of Youngstown. His grandparents emigrated from Slovenia in about 1910. [How close knit the community was will become clear shortly.] His father was a driver for General Patton during World War II, and was known for his ability to transport 'spirits' **quietly**.



Our passion and mission is to share the taste of Takoyaki (octopus dumplings), popular street food in Japan, with Arizonans, and to create more smiles!

More than a Clarinet player

Stephen was pretty good at math, but really liked to play the clarinet. His high school junior chemistry teacher, Mr. Herbert Cramer, said that if they did a project for the high school science fair, and got at least an excellent, he would bump up their grade by one.

He approached Mr. Cramer and said, "I'd really like to do that, but I haven't the foggiest idea what to do." He replied, "What do you enjoy doing?" Steve replied, "You know the only thing I do around here is play clarinet." To which Mr. Cramer replied, "Well, great, study the clarinet." The teacher gave him some physics pointers and sent him on his way. He completed the project and got a SUPERIOR in the high school science fair. Those with Superior went to the County Science Fair at Kent State. At the County Fair, there were many physics and engineering projects. Stephen felt out of place with his clarinet project.

At the County Fair, when the "State Superiors" were announced, Mr. Cramer jabbed Stephen in the ribs, saying, "Now the State Superiors: 'In the area of Physics, Steve Salajko, and his project on the Principles and Acoustics of the clarinet.'"

At the state science fair, he got an award of Excellent. Steve said, "When we got back to Girard, Mr. Cramer dropped me off at my house. Before he departed, he looked me in the eye and said, I want you to remember one thing: clarinet is not the only thing you can do; these last few weeks proved that."

Since Stephen played clarinet and saxophone in High School, he was also in the band, and that meant all the bands: symphonic, concert and marching. He was a pretty good clarinet player, performing in all the competitions and doing pretty well. He started playing Slovenian polkas in seventh grade. When he was a sophomore in high school he got a huge break musically when at age of sixteen he was recruited by the "Del Rezek's Orchestra". The group played weddings, night clubs, and other functions; this was an adult group with guys in their 40s and 50s. He had a problem though, on Friday nights there was always a High School Football game and the band marched, but he also had those local and out of town gigs to play (for which he was paid, and paid well). The high school band director agreed that if he would march during the half-time show, afterwards, he could leave. So, with his gig paying band outfit waiting in the car, and his clarinet in hand, he would march off the field and run to the car, change and head out. He normally played from 10 pm to 2 am on Fridays, and the same on Saturday, with a clarinet lesson Saturday afternoon.

He continued on this path until he graduated from high school, and the next adventure in his life started.

The Marines



Stephen enlisted in the Marines right out of high school, in 1972. His MOS's (Military Occupational Specialty) were 5534 for clarinet; and 5538 for saxophone, yes he played in Marine Corp bands. He ended up playing first with the Quantico Marine Base in Virginia; and then when stationed in Hawaii, with the FMF Pac (Fleet Marine Force Pacific) Band at Pearl Harbor. But although he was in the band, he was, and still is, a Marine. He had to go through boot camp, and each year he had to qualify in marksmanship and do gas mask training. He was a Marine and was expected to be ready to fight. While in boot camp on obstacle course, he involuntarily fell about eight feet, and as a result received a severe shoulder dislocation. This did not deter him from continuing in the Marine Corps.



At his first permanent station at Quantico, he was called into the Band Officer's office; Stephen thought, "Yikes, what did I do wrong?" The Officer placed two pieces of music on his desk: Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* and Carl Maria von Weber's *Concertino for Clarinet*. The Officer said, "Pick one." Now a bit puzzled, he cleverly asked, "Which one do you like, Sir?". To this the Band Officer replied, "You're the one that is going to solo, pick one." He picked *Concertino* and soloed with the Quantico Marine Band up and down the eastern seaboard including New York City, Philadelphia.



While stationed in Hawaii the boot camp injury caught up with him; he had two surgeries and ended up getting medically discharged from the Marine Corps. Before ending this chapter in Stephen's life, notice his Marine picture (at top); the contrast is quite stark: on the left as he started boot camp; as he completed boot camp on the right.

While in the Marines, Stephen joined the Navigators (a Christian ministry devoted to Discipleship) and when he came to Tucson he re-established that contact, which brought him to the University of Arizona where he got a degree in Medical Technology.

He continued playing clarinet and saxophone and added the button box [a diatonic (a very large word for a violist) accordion] to his musical repertoire.

Music, Family and Tucson

Stephen's wife, Linda, is a Tucson native. She grew up on 6th Street and had always lived on 6th Street and she and Stephen live on 6th street, today.

Linda and Stephen were married in a Southern Baptist Church. As they made arrangements for the reception, they realized that they were planning on a polka band (Slovenian tradition), but that Baptist's did not dance. So, an agreement was worked out that the 'dance' floor would be arranged with small groups of chairs, to make dancing difficult and conversations more convenient, with the band playing quietly in the background.

When Linda and Stephen arrived at the reception hall after the wedding ceremony, they found the chairs gone. One of the relatives said, "Someone put chairs on the dance floor!" And with all the 'close' relatives from all across the country bringing their accordions, guitars, button boxes, clarinets, brass and woodwind instruments it was quite the boisterous reception.

At the end of the reception as Stephen and Linda were about to leave for their Honeymoon, their friends called from the microphone, "Hey Steve, we're going to Coolidge to jam; you coming?" Stephen was smart, and he declined. When they got to the hotel he asked Linda if she thought they were going to go. She replied, "Oh yes, I was already re-figuring our plans."

Linda and Stephen have two daughters, Victoria, the eldest played the harp in High School and Marguerite plays the cello in the Tucson Symphony.

Stephen worked at MedTech as an analyst testing blood in Tucson area hospitals for 42 years. He preferred working the shift "about 8:00 pm to 6:00 am; "some call it the graveyard shift; however since we were a hospital, we called it third shift." If you have had the opportunity (pleasure) to spend the night in the hospital you are probably aware

of the 'vampires', the folk that draw blood samples in the middle of the night (3 am or so), Stephen was not a vampire. This work schedule allowed him to see his daughters before and after school and go to all of their activities.

After arriving in Tucson Steve joined up with Slovenian Music Fans from the Tucson and Phoenix areas. He was in three different groups that played: Traditional Slovenian style, Cleveland Style Slovenian, and the "Salajko Ansamble". All these groups played without written music. At one of their small group gigs a gentleman came up and asked why Steve would do a quick look at the lead accordionist just before playing; as she rapidly moved her fingers on the keyboard; then they would start. The guitar/banjo player jumped in, "Oh, he (Steve) can't remember the names of the songs; but he knows from a few notes what to play." Stephen doesn't currently play in a band.



Southwest Strings offers a variety of stringed instruments, bows, accessories, and sheet music.

Stephen taught at the "Casas School of Fine Arts"; it was a school within the Casas Adobes Baptist church on the northwest side of Tucson. The school had about 400 students and offered all the musical instruments; plus art and dance. He taught there for 18 years from 1982 to 2000. Stephen says one of his strengths as a musician is that he can sight read very, very well, but it is also a weakness,

he plateaus quickly, and others often eclipse his playing. He does not participate in the 100 day daily practice challenge, as he said 'I like to play the clarinet, the practice challenge seems like work'. (Message received!)

Stephen and his wife Linda (violin) joined the Foothill Phil in 2011. In May 2014 he and our former (well respected) Maestro Laszlo Veres played the Ponchielli concerto for two Clarinets and Orchestra 'Il Convegno' at the Spring concert. They had so much fun that in May of 2016 the two played Mendelssohn's Concert Piece No. 2.

Today, Stephen is the principal Clarinetist for the Foothills Philharmonic. He is active in his Church and has a Sunday School class that teaches how to study the Bible as it is. He and his wife both play in the Church's orchestra and play once a month. He keeps busy by walking 3 to 5 miles several times a week. And his passion is preparing for and leading several Bible Study groups each week, and he has started memorizing whole books in the Bible.

Stephen does have some words of wisdom he would like to share with the orchestra. We are not paid, we are not professionals, we play because we want to, "so enjoy it".

...as Stephen stomped off, I called, 'Does this mean you won't be offering bagpipe lessons to the orchestra'.



Daughter Marguerite and Stephen playing at a Marine function in Phoenix, through which she received a college scholarship.

Dave Ricci

David Ricci has been a trombone player in the orchestra since the Fall of 2016. David began playing trombone in the 5th grade, but it wasn't his first instrument. He began playing the cello in 3rd grade, but a move to a school without an orchestra program forced him to change to a wind instrument. He decided to stay in bass clef and chose the trombone.

He played trombone until his final year of college, but then put the trombone down for 34 years. David learned about the Foothills Phil from Karin Fiore, violinist, during a Grand Canyon hike with her and her husband. He decided to pick the trombone back up and join the orchestra.

David grew up in a military family. His father was an Air Force officer. David, the oldest of four children, was born in Biloxi, Mississippi.

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His family lived in several locations during his childhood, including California, Ohio, Illinois, New Mexico, and North Dakota. David graduated from high school in Minot, North Dakota. He then attended the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, where he received a degree in Electrical Engineering.

After graduation, David began work as a civilian employee for the Navy at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Keyport, Washington. Here he worked as a manufacturing engineer for various Navy programs. He eventually became the lead engineer for the Heavyweight Torpedo Test Equipment Repair Depot for the Navy, which was responsible for maintaining and repairing test equipment used by the fleet to test torpedoes.

During his time living in Washington, David enjoyed hiking in the Olympic mountains, scuba diving in Puget Sound, and getting his private pilot's license.

After 15 years of life in Washington, David decided to move to Arizona to be closer to family and to escape the gray, wet climate!

He got a job working for Raytheon in Tucson as a test equipment design engineer. There he worked on several programs that were in their production phase. He then moved to working on programs that were in their development phase. He enjoyed the challenges of coming up with new designs to test brand new missiles.

After 25 years at Raytheon, David decided to retire. He remained retired for one year and then decided to return to Raytheon as a contractor. After two years as a contractor, he decided to retire for good at the end of 2024.

In his 28 years living in Tucson, David has enjoyed hiking and cycling. In 2013, he completed the 200+ mile, two day, Seattle to Portland bike ride. He enjoyed the challenge of the ride, and hopes to be able to do other similar rides in the future. The last several years he got involved in film making. He has several IMDB credits for films he has worked

on. The credits include being a Screenwriter, Assistant Director, and Script Supervisor. Some of these films are available on Amazon to watch. David hopes to continue with music and film making, as well as hiking and cycling.



Dave outside the Tower of London, with a friend he ran into while there. ~2023

Who We Are and Why We Do This

Charlotte Raby

The brief summary of our mission on page one is succinct, but packs a lot into one sentence. What does it all mean?

Over the last four years (three, playing), since its resurrection and redefinition, The Foothills Phil, and its mission, have felt rather niche, non-traditional, and even confusing and uncomfortable for some, in how we operate, and prioritize and live our values.

But those who remember the olden-days of the first Foothills Phil, remember how welcoming it was to a variety of players, from beginners to advanced, and from young students to adults of all ages.

I had been a member for only a couple of years by March, 2020, when the district disbanded the 28-year old group. And when I

restarted this orchestra as a nonprofit, I wanted to not only replicate the environment, but improve upon it, by making it more of a true, supportive community, where the flutists might speak to the cellists, the violinists might get to know the trombonists, and people facing barriers in society would be acknowledged and their participation supported.

In my brief experience with the original Foothills Phil, I came to deeply appreciate the opportunities the group provided - to those who hadn't played in 20 years, had just started learning, or even for those who were advanced and played in multiple ensembles in Tucson.



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In June of 2022, a team of volunteers rescued the orchestra's property from the Catalina Foothills School District, which included files of music (3 filing cabinets full), serving paraphernalia (napkins, platters, coffee maker, doilies, signs!), and a plethora of other piles and folders of who-knows-what, just before it all went into the trash. Since then, I and other volunteers sorted music and created an index. Only recently, did I have a chance to go through the who-knows-what piles.

Oh, my. . . Most of that stuff needed the trash bin - old (really, *really* old) registration forms, attendance records, etc. But I did find a gem that aligned with my perceptions of the original orchestra, and the intent of its originators.

On a 9"x12" piece of clear plastic (called a transparency, made of polyester since the 1970s - Google), and which was used on a -- vintage? antique? -- overhead projector, is an article published in the Arizona Daily Star, dated May 13, 1994.

In it, Susan Bovre, one of the founders, discusses the structure and intent of the orchestra, which was created in the new school district to support music students and amateur adults in the community. The first paragraph explains, *"...players don't audition. They don't even have to play all the notes."*

The article continues with Bovre admitting that until the orchestra's start in 1992, she hadn't taken her flute out of its case for 10 years. One 60-year old trumpet player had taken only one lesson so he could join the group. The adults in the orchestra came from all walks of life and careers and were in different phases of their lives. Several doctors would leave in the middle of rehearsals when they were beeped (remember pagers?) to go into work. Many members rushed from their jobs to rehearsals, where they escaped into a different world to unwind and have fun; where they were supported, encouraged, and valued in a relaxed environment.

Laszlo Veres, the conductor of the original orchestra, and now a member of the new group, fully supported the group's members, in their participation and development. *"Laszlo never puts anybody on the spot," says Judi Botwin, the manager.*

Laszlo Veres knew music was for everyone, not just professionals and advanced players.

To bring community to the new orchestra, members volunteer for the many aspects of running the group, such as setting up the band room, bringing treats for breaks, helping with fundraising, the newsletter, and the Young Composer's Competition.

Musicians from across the room began interacting with each other at the treat table, learning others' names and hobbies and careers. We even had a Halloween rehearsal/party. While we did rehearse our program pieces, we also had fun sight-reading Halloween-type music, and gave prizes for costumes.

Those who attended that rehearsal/party truly appreciated having this community to experience connection and play with like-minded others.

The final quote of the article sums it up:

"One of the older violinists came up to me and said, 'Promise me you won't let them stop this orchestra, because it's the most fun I've had in my life.'"

The structure of the original orchestra was diverse and inclusive so that those with scant experience, conflicting life obligations, or disabilities (seen and unseen), could participate, receive support, and occasionally take the time needed to live, AND be a part of the orchestra. That's equity.

It was a scaffolding that worked and filled a special niche, just as it does, today!

~ The Last Word ~ From Caleb Hathaway

Rehearsing Wonder: A Joyful Approach to Practice

What if practice didn't have to feel like work? What if, instead, it became a space for wonder—for curiosity, for surprise, for joy?

While we often think of practice as repetition in pursuit of perfection, science and experience suggest there's another way. One that's no less rigorous, but infinitely more alive: an approach grounded not only in technique but in play.

Play, it turns out, is not just a pastime of children. It's a biological imperative, a creative engine, a learning tool as old as our nervous systems. Neuroscience tells us that during play, the brain lights up in remarkable ways. Dopamine, the neurotransmitter associated with motivation and reward, flows more freely. Regions involved in memory and pattern recognition become more active. New neural pathways begin to form. The brain, quite literally, becomes more flexible—more capable of making novel connections and adapting to new information.

This means that play doesn't just feel good—it prepares the mind for deep learning. It invites experimentation, supports risk-taking, and helps us stay in the process longer, with more presence and less fear.

Let's bring this into a real-world moment. Imagine sitting down to practice a piece that you've been working on for a few weeks. There's a tricky passage—perhaps something rhythmically awkward or harmonically dense. Rather than bearing down with a tight jaw and the inner critic turned up high, try this: slow it down, exaggerate it, play it in an entirely different character. Try it staccato



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and whispering, then legato and grandiose. Flip the dynamics, bend the time, laugh a little when it falls apart. You're not breaking the piece—you're discovering it. Through this playful dismantling, something vital comes into view: the music becomes yours, no longer just a puzzle to solve but a landscape to explore.

This is not wasted time. Quite the opposite—it is time spent wiring new neural pathways, developing flexibility, and building an emotional connection to the material. Mistakes in this context are not the enemy; they are the teachers, the signposts. Each flubbed note or misplaced accent reveals something. Perhaps it shows a blind spot in your motor coordination, or maybe it uncovers a moment you haven't yet internalized musically. Either way, when greeted with curiosity instead of judgment, these moments become rich with possibility.

You might think of a child absorbed in a game—completely focused, yet joyful. This is what psychologists call **flow**, and it's not just for children. Adults, too, can enter flow states, especially during creative acts. Musicians often know this feeling well: that gentle slipping-away of time, the body moving with instinct, the mind alert and free. Play is a doorway into this state. It encourages both relaxation and intensity—a paradox that's at the heart of any meaningful practice.

Play helps us release the myth of mastery. It reminds us that the aim of practice isn't to arrive at some fixed destination, but to engage in an ongoing relationship—with the music, with the body, with the moment. When we practice joyfully, we stay open. We become more resilient, more creative, more ourselves.

Einstein called play "the highest form of research." He wasn't being cute—he was naming a truth many artists know intuitively: that discovery thrives when curiosity leads. That freedom and rigor are not opposites,

but companions. That wonder is not the result of mastery, but often its cause.

So as you step into your next practice session, consider this: What if you made room for wonder? What if you let yourself explore, stumble, invent, and delight? What might become possible—not just in your music, but in your mind?

Rehearsing wonder means honoring the discipline of your craft, while allowing joy to sit beside you at the bench, in the booth, or on the stage. It means trusting that growth comes not only through effort, but through imagination. And it means remembering that, at its best, practice is not a chore—it's an invitation.



Mission

Our community orchestra creates musical opportunities for players often overlooked by traditional ensembles, especially those facing barriers to participation elsewhere. We provide a safe, supportive environment for players across generations, with special consideration for those with diverse needs.

The Foothills Philharmonic, Inc. is a 501c3
Nonprofit organization