

## GROWING NEW AUDIENCES

by Diane Dickson

*So go Downtown  
Things will be great when you're  
Downtown  
No finer place for sure  
Downtown  
Everything's waiting for you  
Downtown*

Petula Clark's iconic song, "Downtown," seems an apt metaphor for the remarkable economic and population growth of our city. In the last *Our Players' Voice* issue, I described how Fort Wayne's status as the "fastest growing metro area in the Great Lakes region" could lead to new opportunities for the Fort Wayne Philharmonic.

Recently, the Journal Gazette reported population numbers in Allen County more than doubled the state's population rate and was five times the national rate in 2021 alone. Our local tourism officials continue to aggressively market Fort Wayne as a regional and national destination.

It also appears that people are clamoring to live... Downtown. According to a May 2021 Fort Wayne Housing Market Analysis, many people within Allen County want to move downtown. The study also anticipates a significant increase in people moving from other parts of the country because of the city's growing national profile. They seek a downtown experience where they can walk

to cultural amenities, restaurants, and sporting events.

Who is living downtown? The Housing Analysis found that downtown residents are predominantly younger singles and couples, empty nesters, and retirees. The younger residents include young professionals, office and retail workers, knowledge workers, students, and college and hospital-related employees. The empty nesters and retirees are enthusiastic participants in community life. Many are still actively involved in well-paying careers in the medical, legal, and financial professions as well as academia. Additionally, traditional and non-traditional families represent a growing demand for housing within the downtown.

What do people like to do downtown? The Upstate Alliance of Realtors wanted to know. They conducted a survey of 475 Allen County residents, ages 21-35, to learn which amenities would entice them to go downtown more often. More arts opportunities and more things to do at night were the second highest priorities, with little variation by age, gender or ethnicity. (Read the whole survey at <https://www.upstarindiana.com>.)

Last issue, I wrote how the Allen County Together (ACT) plan emphasized the importance of cultural amenities to economic development efforts. Ellen Cutter, Chief Economic Development Officer of Greater

## Come Hear Us!

**Benefit Concert, Saturday, May 21 at 8:00 p.m.**

**Players Benefit with Moser Woods**

Philharmonic Players Association members will join Moser Woods, one of NE Indiana's leading rock bands, onstage at the Embassy Theatre for their first-ever collaboration. The concert is a benefit for the Players Association. Tickets can be purchased through the [Embassy Theatre](#) or [Tickmaster](#). More information about Moser Woods can be found on their [website](#).

**Sunday, May 22 at 2:00 p.m.  
Music at the Library**

Come hear a performance by our String Quartet at the Main Library Theater. This is a free concert but registration is required. Find more information at the library [website](#).

Fort Wayne Inc., commented how non-profit organizations are taking a fresh look at fulfilling their missions. In our higher growth economy, she said non-profits will be better positioned to serve the needs of our growing community.

Is there an example of an arts non-profit embracing strategies to achieve greater community engagement? The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is a good example since it was mentioned in the ACT plan. (*Continued on page 7*)

**TOMER MARCUS**

Section Violinist with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic

Interviewed by Gayle Fick

*Welcome, Tomer, would you please, tell us about yourself?*

Thank you. I am 34, born and raised in Israel. I did most of my studies there and spent two years studying in London. I have been in the US since 2015, first as a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, which is a training orchestra run by the Chicago Symphony. Later, I played with Orchestra Iowa in Cedar Rapids, IA and Quad City Symphony, in Rock Island, IL and Davenport, IA.

I have played with the Fort Wayne Phil since 2018 as a sub and more recently, as a member of the violin section and the Meadowlark Quartet. I also teach in the Orchestra's Club Kid-O program at Forest Park Elementary, where we have a group of 19 students in kindergarten and first grade who are getting music education classes after school.

*Do you remember how old you were when you first became aware of classical music, what the occasion was, and what the piece was?*

I don't remember exactly when that was or what piece. My parents had a vinyl recording of the *Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* by J.S. Bach and played by Josef Suk. It might have been my first exposure. It also might have been one of the other various records in their collection.

*What was the first piece of music you heard that made you think that you wanted to play the violin (or another instrument if*

*the violin wasn't the first instrument you studied?*

I can't remember any specific pieces, but I started with the electric organ in first grade, following my older brother. I was possibly influenced by my father who studied the violin throughout high school. Whether it was my father or a piece of music that inspired me, I began violin lessons in second grade.



Tomer with a view of Downtown

*Do you play any other instruments?*

I don't. Whenever I try to play piano, it feels as if no familiarity remains from my brief and early exposure to the organ. A lot of violinists take up the viola at some point, which has a lot in common with the violin, but I have never gone that direction for some reason.

*What inspired you to choose to make music your livelihood?*

I like listening to and performing music, and I enjoy the process of rehearsing a piece of music, with others or on my own, and seeing the results. I thought it would be good to do something that gives me pleasure and challenge.

*Did anyone try to talk you out of becoming a professional musician and if so, who were they and what were their reasons?*

Not that I can think of

*What do you do to unwind?*

I like to run and listen to podcasts and audiobooks.

*Do you listen to classical music very much during your off time?*

I do. It's great for jogging because I can listen to a whole piece or program in one run.

*Who are your top three favorite composers to listen to? to play?*

*Why are they your favorites?*

I like listening to the music of Chopin, especially played by the late Arthur Rubinstein. Its melody and accompaniment (even though most often played on solo piano by one player) complement each other in a way that I find rare. Dvorak is also a composer that I enjoy a lot. He seems to always find the right balance between the instruments involved, whether it is in his chamber music or chamber or symphony orchestra pieces. I enjoy other composers, like Prokofiev, Brahms, and Mozart, and have a hard time choosing another favorite.

*What are your top three genres of music to listen to aside from classical, and what do you like about them? Have there been times in your life when you were able to play that type of music (for work), and if so, when/where?*

When you listen to folk music, you can hear distinct melodies that are unique to certain countries, regions, religions, or ethnic groups. These are beautiful melodies that have been passed on through many generations, often from memory, and they give you a glimpse of

their culture. When in Israel, I play with accordionist, Emil Aybinder, and his band. He arranged a lot of these melodies into concert pieces for audiences to enjoy.

I also like the music of The Beatles, who performed some of my favorite early childhood songs. There is a sense of perfect musical harmony between their vocals and instruments. I get to play orchestrations of their music from time to time. We recently performed a show of their songs with the Philharmonic at the Embassy Theatre. I also enjoy hearing popular music on the radio, and we play some pops shows in the orchestra, which is liberating and fun to do.

*What's the best part of performing for you? Do you prefer performing with small ensembles, the chamber orchestra, or the full orchestra?* The best part of performance for me is the feeling that everyone on stage is on full alert and trying to get their 150%. And to see the appreciation of the audience for what you do. Playing with the Meadowlark Quartet is a lot of fun. We get to choose our own repertoire, that includes baroque and classical era pieces with popular tunes like Rodgers and Hammerstein. And we have the opportunity to present and play it in schools and nursing homes, which the orchestra doesn't get to do as often.

Playing in a chamber orchestra keeps the chamber music quality of active collaboration between the players involved. A good example of that is the Bach in the Barn series that we are going to play soon, and I enjoy playing that every year. You can interact with the audience more closely

there than you normally would at the Embassy. Playing in the full orchestra has its perks, too. We recently played Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5*. Playing it with so many colleagues and hearing the vast orchestration from within the orchestra is a very rewarding experience.

*Do you ever have to wear earplugs in order to protect your hearing while you play? Does that make it difficult to hear the rest of the orchestra, and if so, how do you deal with that? Does the Philharmonic do anything to help you protect your hearing in the full orchestral setting?* I do have to use earplugs occasionally. I don't usually find it difficult to hear the rest of the orchestra (the concerts where I choose to wear earplugs are the ones where the orchestra is loud to begin with.) The challenge for me is more to hear myself well enough to be able to play at my best. So I sometimes use just one earplug, on the side that is closer to the louder sounds around me. The Phil provides sound barriers to reduce the exposure as well.

*What is the farthest you have traveled in order to play (either a gig, or for a festival, concert series, etc.)?* I received my Bachelor's degree in Jerusalem, and our twin academy was in Weimar, Germany. During summer break, we traveled to perform as an orchestra with their students in Weimar and Berlin. It was fun to play with them and get to know each other, and also a culturally educating trip.

*How do you stay inspired as a musician? What inspires you?* Playing with and listening to my colleagues at the Phil is an inspiration, and gives me a good

perspective of music making and the art of performing to an audience. And I tend to think that interesting non-musical experiences, like a good book or television show, also affect the way you express yourself in music.

*How often do you work on music that YOU want to play as opposed to what is on the next Phil concert?*

Not often, but I like a lot of the programs that we play.

*During the pandemic year of no Philharmonic, and few live music gigs, how did you stay inspired? Were you able to set aside any frustrations and use the time productively to work on music you might not have had time to work on during the season? Or did the necessity of finding ways to make ends meet use up any time or energy you might have otherwise spent on music?*

I learned a few new pieces and tried to work on playing aspects that I don't get to practice as much during a concert season. When things returned to normal, it was exciting to be back playing with my colleagues and to see the audience's enthusiasm to hear us play again.

*Do you have any hobbies, and if so what are they?*

I like running outdoors, especially in new environments or with good music or company.

*This question is from a non-musician friend of mine: "What is it like to have a musical soul?" How does it feel to have music be what gets you up in the morning or keeps you going?* The quality of the music of the Phil suggests it's a lot more than just a job for the musicians.

Music does feel a lot like a constant presence. It's an enjoyable art, without a clear cut between your work and leisure time. It's great to do something that you like, but it's also similar to many other jobs where you have tasks to do that you don't always feel like doing.

*Would you give a student (high school age) who might be*

*contemplating a career playing in an orchestra?*

Remember the joy of playing music that you love when things get tough.

*Would you like to share anything else?*

My girlfriend Laura, who also plays with the orchestra, and I moved here a couple of years ago from Chicago, and we enjoy

living here. We have enjoyed living downtown where there are many attractive shops and bustling businesses. I feel that the community here values the Philharmonic, with all its concerts and educational outreach, and it feels significant to be a part of such an organization.

Thank you.

**PLAYERS BENEFIT  
CONCERT  
WITH MOSER WOODS**  
by Adrian Mann

A unique event will take place later this month. On Saturday, May 21 at 8 pm, the Philharmonic Players will present a concert at the Embassy Theatre. They will be joined by Moser Woods, a 4-piece progressive rock band, one of the Midwest's leading groups based right here in our community. The band has spear-headed this project and will donate all of the proceeds to the Players Association.

In the Fall of 2020, during the height of the pandemic, I was contacted by the band. They were concerned about the Phil musicians being placed on furlough for the entire 20-21 season. They presented their vision of a Benefit Concert and asked whether I could provide orchestrations of some of their songs so that the Phil players could join them on stage and help present their music to their fans, enhanced by a full symphony orchestra. I immediately said "YES!" and worked with their drummer, Rick Kinney, to envision how this could be realized.

Now I'm thrilled to report that after a year and a half the orchestrations are complete, and we are in the final stages of preparation for the concert. All of this could not have happened without the many additional hours donated by Rick's friend, Hope Arthur, who provided me with transcriptions of the band's songs from which I created the orchestral music.

Recently, I spoke with Rick and asked if he could provide a closer look into the band's history and what lead up to this project. Here is some of what he shared with me:

**AM (Adrian Mann):** I understand Moser Woods has a large following in our area. Can you tell me how the four of you came together?

**RK (Rick Kinney):** Sure thing. Our guitarist, Shaun Bryan, and I have been playing music together since 7th grade. A couple of years later, we were joined by keyboardist Lance Hoepfner. We all were raised in New Haven and played in various groups for many years. Then in 2003 we formed our own group, Moser Woods. 3 years later we produced our first full album, "Tryptophan."

Then in 2011, we were joined by our bassist, Jake Vachon. Since then we've played in virtually every venue in the Fort Wayne area, as well as many festivals throughout the Midwest. In addition to countless single and weekend appearances, we've completed a half dozen national tours, presenting concerts everywhere from Kansas City to New York.

**AM:** I can see how the band has gained thousands of fans. And you've produced recordings as well?

**RK:** Yes, we have our own recording studio right here in Fort Wayne. Our latest album, "Moser Woods Live at the Clyde Theater" was just released on April 1st of this year.

**AM:** How did you come to choose the Clyde?

**RK:** I've always had an interest in promoting great music, and for years worked at the Embassy. In 2012, I bought the abandoned theater in Quimby Village and had it re-designed to host live concerts. It was a large project that involved much fundraising. One of the principal donors was Chuck Surack, who ended up purchasing the venue. So our new album is a fitting

realization of my original vision for the theater.

**AM:** What gave you the idea of a Benefit Concert for the Phil musicians?

**RK:** We've been talking about playing with a symphony orchestra for the past 20 years. The Philharmonic is such an important cultural asset to northeast Indiana, and we want to see local support grow, especially among our younger audiences. Many of our fans certainly know about the orchestra, but in talking with them it seems not many actually attend their concerts. When we found out the Phil musicians were going to be furloughed for an entire season, not even presenting any virtual concerts, we felt this was a great opportunity for us to join forces and bring our dream of playing with a symphony to fruition.

**AM:** Yes, I'm grateful to our mutual friend, Campbell MacDonald, our Principal Clarinet, for bringing us together. Did you have any other connections with our players?

**RK:** I've known quite a few Phil musicians over the years, having worked at the Embassy where they often perform. One of the musicians, cellist Ed Stevens, began playing with a couple of us and became part of the band for our live concert, recorded in late February of 2019. Guitarist Shaun Bryan created the solo cello charts that will be heard in our May concert.

**AM:** Aside from my writing the orchestrations, what other collaborations were necessary to make the Benefit Concert happen?

**RK:** We've received much generous support for this project from many individuals and companies, including the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Players Association, Moser Woods, the Embassy Theatre, Lupke-Rice

Insurance Agency, Silverbirch Recording Studios, South 40 Video Productions, and stations 89.1 WBOI FM and 96.3 WXKE FM.

**AM:** Well Rick, on behalf of my fellow musicians, we are so excited to be able to perform with you and are greatly looking forward to joining Moser Woods on May 21st. Thanks for all you've done to make this project happen.





## COMMUNITY OF CATS

By Alison Chorn

In August of 2021, I stumbled across a litter of kittens under a dumpster and wanted to help. I soon realized there was a fairly large cat colony that existed in that same area. I have to be vague about the area due to some concerns for the colony's well-being.

I learned that some nearby workers had been feeding and caring for these cats for years now, but no one tried to get them fixed yet. They are mostly feral cats that are afraid of humans, but there were four cats that would approach me and let me pet them.

After feeding them for some time, I got in touch with a local animal lover who also volunteered for HOPE for Animals/Humane Fort Wayne. She is an expert in this field, and we got to work.

She gave us a large, heated water bowl along with more cat shelters. It was winter and very cold out, so we needed to make sure they all had shelter.

Some of these cats had developed conjunctivitis and needed antibiotics. We were able to get the appropriate medicine and put it in the sick cats' food. Conjunctivitis is very contagious, so we ended up putting the medicine in the communal water dish. We were able to eliminate it completely!

I was able to catch the four more friendly cats with some food and patience. My contact found an amazing foster who took them in and is caring for them. We took them all to Humane Fort Wayne and got them fixed and up to date on their vaccinations.

The friendliest cat got a home right away, and his buddy just recently found a home as well. One of the cats was just too used to being outside and did not warm up to people indoors. Without a proper outdoor home to re-home her to, we had to take her back to the colony. We are still looking for a home for the last friendly cat that we caught. The foster named him Caramel (pictured to the right.) He is an orange and white tabby, about a year old, and does best when he is around other friendly cats. If you or anyone you know is looking for a cat to add to your household, please let me know, and we can set up a meet with the foster!

The cat colony is in a location that is not the safest place for cats. There is a lot of traffic, and unfortunately, there have been some casualties since I've been caring for them. The ideal solution would be to find as many outdoor barn homes as we can to re-home them. This has turned out to be a very difficult task, and so far I haven't been able to find a single barn home for them. If anyone knows of someone looking for one or more outdoor barn cats, please contact me!

Our next step is trapping as much of the colony as we can and taking them to Animal Care and Control to get fixed, vaccinated, chipped, and ear tipped as part of their community cat program. They will then be released back where they came from unless we can



find suitable barn homes.

If you'd like to help, please spread the word! We would love to re-home as many of these cats as we can. I also started a GoFundMe page to help with the expenses. You can visit it at: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/d7dfd-cat-fundraiser>

Please email me at [alisonchorn@gmail.com](mailto:alisonchorn@gmail.com) if you'd like more information.

*(Continued from Page 1)*

The Museum's mission is "serving the broadest array of constituencies in our region" with a goal to "be a vital and welcoming arts institution in the community."

I asked Charles Shepard, President and CEO of the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, for his insights about achieving this mission. "What I have in mind when I talk about 'the broadest array of constituencies' is the interwoven complex of the many types of people and many types of interests that collectively make up this region's 'palette' for aesthetic experiences," said Charles. "We are sincerely here to offer everybody the opportunity to engage with a wide range of fine art in an equally wide range of media," he said.

I was curious about patron attendance and membership income. Charles explained, "We work to create exhibitions that will resonate with a high number of people...in an attempt to appeal to the different interests of our audiences. With exhibitions changing all the time, visitors began to realize that they need to visit frequently. So the number of exhibitions was a key factor to a rise in attendance."

"The increase in our membership income is steadily increasing because more people are realizing that they want to visit often, and membership is an economical way to do that. Also, we have talented staff that raised the bar for retention and adopted strategies for adding to the membership base," he said.

I asked Charles if Fort Wayne's trajectory of growth influenced how the Museum's 2021-2026

strategic goals were formulated. He responded, "Fort Wayne's population growth is certainly on our minds, as is the growth of tourism in the City. We appreciate being recognized in the ACT plan, and our present and future strategic plans project an ongoing effort across multiple fronts to increase our presence in the community and beyond."

The Museum of Art's mission and strategic goals have embraced the spirit of innovation, inclusion, and diversity. The result has been increased patronage, more contributed membership income, and aspirations to expand its reach locally, regionally and nationally.

The musicians and many of our supporters wonder if the Fort Wayne Philharmonic's mission, "To foster and instill a lifelong love of symphonic music through performance and education," will inspire the orchestra's leadership to create more concert experiences that are meaningful for our community?

During my tenure in the orchestra, the Philharmonic gave 10 Masterworks concerts, had a chamber orchestra series, and utilized its full-time musicians to present educational concerts to elementary children in Allen and surrounding counties. Will Philharmonic leadership restore this level of activity in order to "foster and instill a lifelong love of symphonic music?"

One of the Philharmonic's "strategic imperatives" is to "grow its listener base by boldly innovating to connect with new groups of people." Will this lead to growing the orchestra's audience?

The Philharmonic used to collaborate with local churches and their choirs for unforgettable neighborhood concerts. The well-attended "Unplugged" series, whose informal atmosphere was combined with a social event, appealed to people who were new to classical music. Will the current orchestra leadership create innovative performances to "connect with new groups of people?"

The musicians of the Philharmonic know the Fort Wayne community has loved and supported this orchestra for generations. Now a younger generation, attracted to downtown Fort Wayne, has expressed a desire for more arts experiences. The musicians are eager to reach out to them, while offering more performances for our valued concert-going supporters.

As a reminder, the musicians' contract agreement with the Philharmonic will expire in August. The musicians look forward to discussions with the orchestra's leadership about serving the needs of a diverse and growing population. Will we collaborate on a vision that is in tune with the growth of our community? Will the management and board continue to support a full-time resident symphony orchestra worthy of the "fastest growing metro area in the Midwest?"

**Sources:** *2021 Smart Growth poll, Upstate Alliance of Realtors:*

<https://www.upstarindiana.com>

*City of Fort Wayne:*

<https://fwcommunitydevelopment.org/planning/2021housingmarketpotential>

Fort Wayne Museum of Art,  
2020-2021 Annual reports,  
<https://fwmoa.org/about-us/>

Fort Wayne Philharmonic:  
<https://fwphil.org/about-the-phil/mission-values>



Members of the FWPPA donated their services for about an hour of music making on February 13 to raise money for new pickleball courts in Huntertown. Money raised at this event will go towards four dedicated pickleball courts in Huntertown Family Park. Pictured left to right are David Rezits, Michael Acosta, Tomer Marcus, and Deb Welter.

*Our Players' Voice is published by the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Players' Association. Our writers for this issue are Diane Dickson, retired Philharmonic oboist and Gayle Fick, wife of Principal Bassoonist Dennis Fick, Alison Chorn, Principal Percussion, and Adrian Mann, Principal Bass. For more information, visit our website at [www.fwpmusicians.com](http://www.fwpmusicians.com). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).*