

## President's Letter

Dear VSS Members,

It is hard to believe that we are headed into the holiday season and that 2021 is drawing to a close! The latter part of this year started to feel almost “normal”, as the VSS was able to host two wonderful events that were attended by many of our members – and by a few new friends, as well.



In September, the VSS had the privilege of welcoming incoming VSO Music Director Eric Jacobsen at an elegant reception at the William and Mary Alumni House, sponsored by Compass Wealth Strategies. The turn-out was fabulous and Eric’s energy and enthusiasm were evident to all who attended. It was a wonderful way for our members to make a connection with the new music director and to get a chance to showcase the Williamsburg audience’s support and dedication to VSO. And as an added treat, guests were delighted by the performance by the young and talented Tidewater Cello Ensemble, led by WJCC orchestra teacher Susan Hines and her daughter, Erin Hines. Many thanks to Lara & Rick Overy for sponsoring and facilitating this event. Thanks also to Stacey Grimsley for sponsoring the wine bar.

In October, the fun continued with a wonderful dinner and private concert offered exclusively to VSS members. Thanks to the idea and generous sponsorship from Bob & Diane Petterson, our members enjoyed the music of the VSO’s Chesapeake Quartet along with dinner at the beautiful Ford’s Colony Country Club. We

received rave reviews from those who attended. It was simply wonderful to listen to glorious music and to visit once again with friends, old and new. Many thanks to Jean Marie Thompson for organizing the many details that made this event so special.

And if you attended one or both of these events, we want to say a big Thank You to you, as well. The VSS could not carry on without the attendance and participation of our members. **We also cannot carry on without your support in another form – we need your help to plan and organize future events and activities!** After such a long hiatus, we would like to start planning more VSS activities, like the ones mentioned above, in support of the 100th season of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. However, we are in real need of hands-on help in order to make that happen. Involvement can range from a minimal time commitment focused on a specific activity/task to playing a more consistent role in VSS leadership. But we really cannot do it without you. **Here are a few opportunities I ask each of you to consider:**

### - Social Events

*Planning and execution - looking for a team to generate ideas and coordinate and promote events.*

### - Annual Gala

*Interested in having some fun while we plan for Gala fun on April 213, 2022? We are looking for creative and action-oriented members that want to help with pre-event planning and/or assist onsite at the Gala.*

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### **- Quarterly Newsletter**

*We are looking for writers, editors, photographers, organizers and anyone that can help create this quarterly publication.*

### **- Membership**

*Be a VSS ambassador - help build our community of music enthusiasts and help expand our membership in creative ways.*

### **- Become a VSS Board Member**

*Have a seat at the table as we make important decisions about how best to support the VSO and plan for the future of the VSS.*

Please reach out to me or any VSS board member to express your interest or to inquire further about our needs. The good news is you can even bring your own friends. Encourage your friends to get involved with you.

Finally, there are two more ways you can help ensure the longevity and success of the Virginia Symphony Society – membership dues and gala tickets! After waiving membership dues for a year since Covid prevented us from offering anything to our members, the VSS will now resume collecting annual membership fees. Our membership team will be contacting those whose membership is nearing expiration. It is very understandable that many members do not realize they are in arrears, given all the disruption over the last year and half. If you happen to know you that you have not renewed your membership in the last year or more, you do not have to wait until you are contacted. In fact, it would be a tremendous help if you could take a moment to renew online through our website ([vasymphonysociety.com](https://vasymphonysociety.com)) or by mailing a check to P.O. Box 102, Williamsburg, VA 23187. Thank you!

And of course, our most important upcoming event is the long-awaited, twice postponed Annual Gala to be held on Saturday, April 23, 2022 at Two Rivers Country Club. If you can only do one thing to the support the VSS, reserve that date now and purchase your tickets as soon as they become available in the new year.

Along with the VSS board and the VSO, I remain very grateful to all our members for your continued loyalty and support. Happy Holidays to all!

All the best,  
*Sarah Ortego*

This is an exciting time of year as we enter the holiday season. There are many upcoming musical moments to be enjoyed. Check out these ideas you can share and gift the magic of music:

- ENJOY LIVE HOLIDAY CONCERT. The VSO is presenting Holiday Brass in Williamsburg on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Go to the VSO website <https://virginiasymphony.org/> to find out more about all the concerts this season including the fabulous Holiday Pops at Ferguson.
- GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP. As we approach the holiday season, what better gift for a friend than membership in the VSS. As you know, the VSS sponsors lovely events for our members, a 15% discount on VSO concert tickets, and the satisfaction of supporting our internationally- recognized orchestra. Visit our website <https://vasymphonysociety.com> for more information.
- MAKE A DONATION TO THE VIRGINIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. The pandemic hit orchestras hard, and the VSO is no exception. Please consider making a donation directly to the VSO on behalf of yourself or as a gift on behalf of a friend or loved one at <https://virginiasymphony.org/> and hit the “Support the VSO” tab.

## Quarterly Newsletter A Letter from the Editors

It has been our privilege to edit this Newsletter for the last decade or so. But we think now is the time to retire and hand the reins over to someone new. We have informed the Board that we plan this to be the last issue we produce.

Now we need someone to step up and take on this challenge. We have found it to be enjoyable and we learned a lot along the way.

It's not a particularly hard job and, as it is produced quarterly, required only about a days time every three months. You gather the material you want to include, make a layout using a program like Microsoft Word or Publisher or Print Shop, paste in the information and finally convert everything into a PDF file and send it to Kristen Bennington at the VSO office. She and her staff handle the printing and mailing.

This is an important means of communicating with VSS membership and keeping everyone involved. As the VSS returns to full activity it is especially important. Please consider taking it on and let Sarah Ortego know of your interest. You don't have to be a member of the VSS Board although you would find it helpful to attend at least some Board meetings to gather insights into the material to include.

We remain ready to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely,  
*Diane and Bob Petterson*

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## STUDENT TICKETS

Did you know that student tickets are available for most all concerts performed by the VSO. They cost jst \$10 each. Why not treat a student you know, and maybe even classmates, to a concert? You may be starting them on the road to appreciating great music.

## Vision Forward – A Campaign to Celebrate 100 Years of Creativity and Community Service

The VSO has been working diligently on the largest fundraising campaign in our history, the Vision Forward Campaign. Our goal is to raise \$12 million towards the VSO's endowment to preserve the orchestra as a strong community asset for generations to come. With the help of some of our closest friends and VSS members, we've raised over \$11 million! We're incredibly grateful to have friends who believe in investing in the mission of VSO and music in the region.

As our campaign draws to an end, please consider being a part of building the VSO's legacy. When you join the community of Vision Forward donors, you help the VSO:

- Enhance programming to serve community educational, artistic and wellness needs
- Increase outreach, artist collaborations and community concerts by empowering our artists.
- Foster lifelong learning from schoolchildren through the university level and beyond
- Increase non-traditional partnerships in areas including health care, higher education and social services, as well as with other arts organizations across the region.

At the core of the VSO's mission is our focus on increasing our engagement with the community by meeting people where they live and gather, simultaneously diversifying our audience as well as the very makeup of our organization. Funds raised by the Vision Forward campaign build a healthy endowment and will help us do all this great work and more.

All gifts to our Vision Forward campaign will be matched, meaning your gift will be doubled now through November 30. To help us reach our \$12 million goal please call Lauren DiPeppe, Director of Development, at 757-213-1417.

# Celebrate the Holidays with the VSO

## *Holiday POPS!*

*December 10, 2021 | 7:30PM | Ferguson Center, Newport News*

*Join us for the must-see holiday tradition of the season – Holiday POPS! There’s no better way to lift your spirits than with seasonal songs and traditional carols delivered in full sound and spectacle by the Virginia Symphony, the Virginia Symphony Chorus, and special guests. Holiday POPS will have all the magical elements you’ve come to expect and more – high energy, familiar carols, and lots of holiday warmth! And we’ll even throw in a surprise or two! We can’t wait to celebrate the 2021 Holiday season together!*



## *Jingle Bell Jam*

*December 12, 2021 | 3:00PM | Sandler Center, Virginia Beach*

*Santa Claus is coming to town and he’s stopping by to be a part of the VSO’s ever-popular Jingle Bell Jam! Celebrate the magic of the season with an afternoon that showcases the music of the holidays performed by the best talent in Hampton Roads. You won’t want to miss this holly jolly concert. Get your tickets early – this family favorite is sure to sell out! Pre-Concert lobby activities begin at 2:00pm.*

## *Holiday Brass*

*December 15, 2021 | 7:30PM | St. Bede Catholic Church, Williamsburg*

*The bold sounds of the Virginia Symphony brass section ring in the holidays with a blast! Experience the festive sounds of the season in a concert filled with wit, virtuosity, and the glorious music of the holidays – featuring the VSO brass and percussion sections in an all-new program. You’ll enjoy music from a variety of styles that have made this concert a new holiday tradition.*



## *Hallelujah! Handel’s Messiah*

*December 17, 2021 | 7:30PM | First Baptist Church (Warwick Blvd), Newport News*

*December 18, 2021 | 7:30PM | Harrison Opera House, Norfolk*



*We welcome back Virginia Symphony’s founding chorusmaster Don McCullough for the holidays. After his departure from Virginia, he led the Kennedy Center’s Master Chorale and is currently director of the Jacksonville*

*Symphony Chorus (FL). McCullough will conduct the VSO Chorus in excerpts from Messiah, the perennial holiday favorite that continues to bring hope and joy to listeners nearly 300 years after it was written.*

**NEW VSO MUSIC DIRECTOR ERIC JACOBSEN PRESENTS HIS DEBUT CONCERTS WITH SPECIAL GUEST AND GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING SOLOIST BRANFORD MARSALIS DECEMBER 2 - 5**



In a monster musical weekend featuring everything from a romantic-era favorite to the first U.S. performances of music from British composer Sally Beamish, conductor Eric Jacobsen makes his Virginia Symphony Orchestra debut as its 12th Music Director with Grammy-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis as soloist in three concerts across Hampton Roads -- December 2, 3 and 5.

Jacobsen, known for challenging audiences with an exciting mix of music, having fun, and a flair for surprises, will open each concert with Mozart's overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*. In addition to the Beamish pieces, the performances will also include two Mahler songs, *Urlicht* and *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, before concluding the evening with Brahms'

magnificent *Symphony No. 2*.

At the core of the program are the two pieces written for saxophone and orchestra featuring Branford Marsalis called "The Imagined Sound of Sun on Stone" and "Under the Wing of the Rock" by composer Sally Beamish, whose works for orchestra and opera have riveted the attention of the media and audiences worldwide. Based in London, the composer, who has previously collaborated with Marsalis, will be in the audience for the performances as well as recording sessions earlier in the week for a CD to be released worldwide in 2022. The weekend's performances will also be recorded and available to stream through Dreamstage on December 10th at 7:30pm.



**Branford Marsalis | Jazzwise** New Orleans-born Branford Marsalis is an award-winning saxophonist, band leader, featured classical soloist and a film and Broadway composer. He has received three Grammy Awards and a citation by the National Endowment for the Arts as a Jazz Master.

The Branford Marsalis Quartet, formed in 1986, remains his primary means of expression. In its virtually uninterrupted three-plus decades of existence, the quartet has established a rare breadth of stylistic range as demonstrated on the band's latest release, *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*. However, Mr. Marsalis has not confined his music to the jazz quartet context. A frequent soloist with classical ensembles, he has become increasingly sought after as a soloist with acclaimed orchestras around the world, performing works by composers such as Copland, Debussy, Glazunov, Ibert, Mahler, Milhaud, Rorem, Vaughan Williams, and Villa-Lobos. His legendary guest performances with the Grateful Dead and collaborations with Sting have made him a fan favorite in the pop arena as well.

The Thursday, December 2nd performance will be held at 7:30pm at the Ferguson Center for the Arts in Newport News. Friday, December 3rd at Norfolk's Chrysler Hall at 7:30pm, and the weekend will conclude with a 7:30pm performance at the Sandler Center in Virginia Beach on Sunday, December 5th. Masks are required at all performances.

Tickets start at just \$25.

## VSO to Release Recording with Grammy Award Winning Artist Branford Marsalis

Eric Jacobsen is undertaking his first major artistic project as VSO Music Director – a recording featuring the VSO with Grammy-winning artist Branford Marsalis planned for international distribution in 2022.

Eric Jacobsen, conductor

Branford Marsalis, saxophone

Sally Beamish: “The Imagined Sound of Sun on Stone”

Sally Beamish: “Under the Wing of the Rock”

Brahms: Symphony No. 2



Why is this such an important and potentially significant project for the VSO?

First, it pairs the Orchestra with an internationally renowned marquee artist; second, it will include the world premiere recording of music by composer Sally Beamish, whose works for orchestra and opera have riveted the attention of the media and audiences worldwide. But most importantly, this project is the first as part of a new artistic plan to bring a new level of excitement and artistry to our performances through collaborations with great artists, new social media attention, and building the Orchestra’s profile across the region and nationally.

If you’re interested in supporting this once in a lifetime project, please call Lauren DiPeppe at (757) 213 - 1417 or email [ldipeppe@virginiasymphony.org](mailto:ldipeppe@virginiasymphony.org).

## An Autumn Evening with Dinner and Music at Ford’s Colony Country Club

On October 20 th , VSS members and guests enjoyed dinner and a concert by the Chesapeake Quartet at Ford’s Colony Country Club in the beautiful Williamsburg dining room.

Welcome cocktails and hors d’oeuvres were held on the terrace where everyone enjoyed the beautiful Autumn weather. After dinner, members were treated to classics such as Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, Brahms Hungarian Dance plus other music by choice from the talented string quartet.



With the generous sponsorship by Bob & Diane Pettersen, we were able to offer this special event to VSS members.

Thank you to Jean Marie Thompson for leading the arrangements for this special evening. It was simply wonderful to listen to glorious music and to visit with friends, old and new.

We would like to start planning more Virginia Symphony Society (VSS) activities like this evening but need more member involvement for the planning and execution of these events. Email Sarah Ortego at [sarah.galinas@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.galinas@gmail.com) or let a board member know if you are interested to get involved as we need your support from generating ideas, to promoting and coordinating logistics.

## Peter Pelham

### Colonial Williamsburg's Premier Musician

Pelham was born in London 9 December 1721. His father, also named Peter Pelham, was an engraver and an artist. Around 1730 the Pelhams immigrated to Boston, where the father apprenticed his son to Charles Theodore Pachelbel. The latter left for Charleston, South Carolina in 1736 and Pelham followed him. He remained in Charleston for some time, studying with Pachelbel and later becoming a harpsichord teacher himself. In 1744 Pelham became first organist of Trinity Church in Boston.

Around 1750 he moved to Williamsburg, Virginia, where in 1755 he became the first organist of Bruton Parish Church. In the early days the only music allowed would have been a prelude and postlude (instrumental music before and after the service) and the responsive chanting of psalms. Because of the ban on music, having an organ was highly unusual, but since the church was in the capital city and had a number of high class congregants, the organ was deemed necessary. Peter Pelham began the tradition of Candlelight Concerts at the church by allowing locals to come in and listen while he gave lessons to promising students. He held that post for almost 50 years, until 1802. Pelham actively participated in the city's musical life, giving concerts and conducting. He also supported himself and his family by running a small music store, as well as by teaching young ladies to play the harpsichord and spinet. He served as musical director when "The Beggar's Opera" first was performed in the city.

Like many musicians then and now, Pelham's art and talent were insufficient to maintain his growing family. He and his wife, Ann, had 14 children, some of whom died in infancy. He supplemented his income by acting as a clerk to Governors Fauquier and Botetourt and was supervisor of the printing of currency from 1758 to 1775. Governor Dunmore, Lord Botetourt's successor, named Pelham keeper of the Public Gaol.

After Pelham assumed his duties at the Gaol, he conveniently – and habitually – took a prisoner to the church to pump the organ while he played. It appears that Pelham was more successful as an organist than as a gaoler. He was criticized for occasionally "appearing much disguised with liquor," and some felt that his laxity led to a number of escapes. An inquiry ordered by the General Assembly cleared Pelham of all charges, however.



In 1802 Pelham became blind. His daughter Elizabeth succeeded him for a brief period as organist of Bruton Church. Pelham died in Richmond, Virginia 28 April 1805. Although several collections he compiled of music by other composers are extant, almost none of his own music survives, save for a short harpsichord

minuet.

Today, Bruton Parish, carries on the traditions started by Pelham while keeping up with modern trends in worship. The two primary choirs, the Pelham and Chancel choirs, sing in the morning services and at special concerts such as the John D. Rockefeller Jr memorial concert. In addition to the two choirs, there are also a college student choir that sings at an evening service, two children's choirs that sing on occasion during services and a handbell choir that plays during services and at special concerts. The church continues the tradition of candlelight concerts with guest choirs, guest organists, and instrumentalists several nights each week.

In January 2011, the church took Peter Pelham's tradition of instructing students to a new level and created the position of organ scholar. The first organ scholar was Allen T. Blehl of Oradell, New Jersey. Blehl studied organ since he was 13, and continued his studies at the College of William and Mary under instructor Thomas Marshall in addition to performing services and concerts at Bruton Parish Church

# NEWS FLASH - NEW IN WILLIAMSBURG

February 27th at 6:30pm at Williamsburg Presbyterian Church (215 Richmond Road) the VSO Chorus (70-80 singers) accompanied by piano and organ will present a concert. The official announcement has not yet been released so this is an early notice so that you can mark your calendars now.

Program Title: "Singing the Darkness to Light" Featuring works from Adolphus Hailstork, Margaret Bonds, Bach and more.

The featured piece will be Morten Lauridsen's Lux Aeterna. The five movements of Lux Aeterna are based on various references to light from sacred Latin texts: perpetual light, light risen in the darkness, Redeemer-born light from light, light of the Holy Spirit, light of hearts, most blessed light, eternal light — all supporting an earthbound spirit seeking not only mercy, understanding, and consolation but also renewal.

Tickets will go on sale following the official announcement.



For all details and concert information visit [www.virginiasympphony.org](http://www.virginiasympphony.org)

For tickets to any performance call 757-892-6366

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