



Annual Report

July 1, 2021 — June 30, 2022

Greetings, supporters and friends of Mountain Top Music

At the end of 2021 I thought making it through the year ahead would be the toughest challenge our organization would ever face. Maybe I was right at the time. But, thanks to the hard work of everyone on “Team Mountain Top” and the generosity of our community, we navigated the uncertainties of an ongoing pandemic, taught lots of music lessons, produced incredible concerts, and ended our 25th year in a very healthy position – artistically and financially. However, today, looking forward, I say the same thing: making it through the year ahead will be our toughest challenge yet. Increased expenses, increased expectations, and learning the ropes of successfully operating a performance venue are a few of the challenges we’ll be facing – without the safety net of Covid-19 relief funds. It’s a heavy lift, but we feel up to the challenge. We have an excellent team to guide us successfully forward, and motivation is easily found hearing fabulous concerts in the Majestic and watching the Valley’s youth continue to enjoy their music lessons.

Even with the turbulence caused by the ongoing pandemic we can reflect on the 2021/2022 year as one of our best. Opening the renovated Majestic Theatre to the public was a thrilling reward for the many years of hard work renovating it. Creating the intimate Majestic Café venue has helped us grow, and connected us to new friends. Welcoming new faculty members to the educational programs brought a new vibrancy to the school; and while welcoming the newcomers, we also find

reason to celebrate the musicians and teachers who, over two decades, have helped build Mountain Top into what it is today.

The year ahead will bring many challenges, some we know and some we’ll meet along the way. Behind our impressive brick façade and shining marquee lights we are still a small organization, growing into our new surroundings. Our educational programs thrive under the leadership of a small, dedicated staff of professionals; and currently we rely on that same staff, plus a large network of volunteers to run the Majestic Theatre and Café venues. We’re excited to grow our concert programming this year, and we hope to see audiences in the region return to (and exceed) pre-pandemic attendance levels. In growing our concert series, we’ll be growing our organization in a way that engages the wider community, employs creative professionals, and enhances the cultural life of the Conway area.

We love bringing fantastic performing arts experiences to the Mt. Washington Valley as much as we love teaching music to students of all ages. So buy a ticket to a concert, sign up for some music lessons, or stop by the Majestic Café on a Friday evening. Each time you do those things, you’re helping us realize our mission of *enriching lives and building community through music*. With your support and patronage the year ahead will be another in which the rewards eclipse the challenges!

George Wiese, *Executive Director*



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Message from the Board of Trustees

On behalf of
Mountain Top Music's Board
of Trustees, I want to extend
a huge round of applause to
the scores of people who
stepped to the plate and
contributed their valuable
time, energy, and ideas to
help us grow and prosper.



Especially noteworthy this
year was Friends of the Majestic, Mountain Top's new
volunteer team, ably chaired by Trustee Deb Goulding.
This Annual Report and the successful year it
represents is dedicated to them. You'll find their names
listed on page 8. Without them, it just wouldn't have
happened!

Non-profit arts organizations like ours are, by
their nature, places of ideas and vision. Thinking
thoughtfully through such inspiration, balancing new
ideas with other needs, and executing them takes time,
talents, and sometimes additional resources, which
may or may not be immediately available. We owe our
profound gratitude to the many local musicians who
offered uncompensated advice and performance; to
the community members wanting to staff the box
office, tend bar, or usher at concerts; to the trustees
and advisors who freely shared their professional
experience and expertise; and to the staff and faculty
who cheerfully worked overtime to make things
happen when no one else could. We all share a certain
amazement at what has been accomplished in this first
full year of operations at the Bolduc Block!

To achieve our rich plans for the future of
Mountain Top, much more work remains, but the
commitment of this stellar group of volunteers to our
mission of "enriching lives and building community
through music" is steadfast and energizing. We invite
you to join the Friends of the Majestic as a valued
partner in our work; together we can create
unforgettable musical experiences while enjoying the
company of other like-minded volunteers.

Judy Kennedy

Chair, Mountain Top Music Center Board of Trustees

Report from the Director of Education

I am pleased to report that the Music School at Mountain Top remains strong. Registration is back on par with our pre-pandemic years, and attendance is excellent. We have consistently offered in-person lessons with safety protocols in place and online lessons for those who require or desire them. In addition, selected group classes such as the Singers Workshop, Jazz Band, Chamber Ensembles, Youth and Adult Jam Bands, and Community Orchestra have safely resumed. Likewise, we have renewed our school outreach programs throughout the Mount Washington Valley and Fryeburg areas, such as career days and after-school programs. With fifteen faculty teaching more than 150 lessons and classes per week, the halls of the Bolduc Block are brimming with music from jazz to fiddle tunes to video game themes and much more every day.

The school's extraordinary, creative, and dedicated teachers continually demonstrate the steadying comfort of music in uncertain times and the excitement of mastering a dreamed-of skill. No matter how many world-class musicians visit Conway to perform at the Majestic Theatre, the teaching faculty of Mountain Top Music Center are the hometown heroes who keep our community humming every day. Across all our programming, we have around 200 students of all learning levels and ages enthusiastically showing up all year round. That is a testament to the commitment of teachers and the support of parents who recognize the value of a shared learning experience well taught.

Three of those teachers are celebrating over 20 years of teaching at Mountain Top Music Center this year, having started in the school's earliest days when there was only a two-room "office" on the top floor of the Gibson Center and one rental cello stored in the bathtub! So let me tell you a little bit about each of them.



CHRIS NOURSE

Chris has been on the Mountain Top Music Center faculty since its founding in 1996 and teaches violin, viola,

and chamber music. His teaching philosophy is simple: "As a teacher, I realize that studying an instrument can be intimidating at first. However, I find that with enjoyable lessons, playing many kinds of music, and introducing new tools only when needed, students make progress and feel good about their accomplishments. I deeply enjoy teaching and playing. Music has greatly enriched my life. My students feel the same way once they get going."

Chris studied violin at Hartt College with Robert Glazer and Abraham Mishkin. He was a member of the Granite State Symphony, the Granite State Opera Orchestra, and the White Mountain String Quartet. Chris has been a conductor and coach for the North East Youth Symphony, the Northeastern Suzuki Festival, and NHASTA's String Festival. He was selected as String Teacher of the Year in 2002 by the NH Association of String Teachers (NHASTA)



CHAD CUMMINGS

Since the fall of 2003, Chad has led the school's rock and pop music side, teaching guitar, piano, bass, and voice. He tailors his teaching style to each student and works to find the best approach to build a strong foundation and then fills in any gaps. "Every mind is different," he says. "Ultimately, each student will become competent in basic music theory, scale knowledge, staff and chart reading, chord comping, song structure, and improvisation."

Studying piano at age seven at the Marie Assumption Academy sparked Chad's passion for music. He discovered guitar at 11, and by age 15, he was performing professionally on the Greater Boston club circuit. Today, Chad plays bass and keyboards and sings lead and harmony vocals for Brazen Cane, a classic rock and new country band that's a favorite of audiences across New England.

He teaches four days each week at Mountain Top and has helped hundreds of students of all ages achieve their musical dreams. He is known for his unique "glove approach" to chording, which along with his ability to match a student to the music they've always wanted to play, has earned him the admiration of students and parents alike.



ERIC ROLLNICK

Eric has a B.S. in elementary education and has taught drum set and percussion at Mountain Top Music Center since 1997. He directs the local community steel band, Steel Dreams, and builds and tunes pans for steel bands throughout New England. He also plays African drums and calls contra dances.

Since playing drums at eight with a drum and bugle corps in New Jersey, percussion has always been a part of Eric's life. In his teens, he played in rock bands and later branched into blues and jazz.

In 1980, the mesmerizing sound of a steel band at a music festival near his new home in New Hampshire captured Eric's musical interest and started him on his journey into pan culture. In 1989, his desire to learn the craft of building and playing pan led him to the republic of Trinidad and Tobago; since then, Eric has continued frequent pilgrimages to the birthplace of pan. Here Eric learned firsthand the pan's development and history. He feels much gratitude towards the pan crafters and players who taught him their art and shared their techniques and skills with him. In 1994, Eric formed the five-member band Mango Groove, which plays throughout New Hampshire and the rest of New England. In addition, Eric presents comprehensive workshops and talks on pan and the culture of Trinidad and Tobago, where the pan originated.

Dr. Julia Howell, *Director of Education*

2021– 2022 Concerts and Events

From the need in 2020 and early 2021 to stream most concerts rather than gather to hear them in person due to the pandemic, vaccines and the warmer summer weather began to ease fears and restrictions. By Fall 2021, Mountain Top was back planning concerts for live audiences, masked and distanced, in our newly renovated 290-seat Majestic Theatre as well as enjoying a sprinkling of home and public venue concerts.

OPENING THE MAJESTIC THEATRE

The very first live concerts at the Majestic were the return of Mountain Top's popular "First Friday Series" where on the first of each month, the faculty and their friends perform for an hour at noon for anyone who wants to drop by on a "by donation" basis. These small, intimate concerts were quickly followed by the spectacular guest appearance of Singer/Songwriter Kemp Harris with Al Hospers and the Valley Horns in October 2021 as our first "Mainstage Series" concert. An all-Beethoven night with musicians from the Sebago Long Lake Festival, the annual Holiday Jazz home concert with seacoast pianist Tom Snow and local saxophonist Mike Sakash, and Vince Guaraldi's A Charlie Brown Xmas performed by Heather Pierson's acoustic trio rounded out the Majestic's first season.



Spring 2022 brought even more wonderful talent and bigger audiences to the Majestic including the return of Heather Pierson, this time with her All Star Big Band, for a Mardi Gras Party which inspired sing-alongs and dancing in the aisles, an amazing Cello Quartet in April, innovative electronic music with technical wizard Sara

MOUNTAIN TOP
music center

PRESENTS

SEBAGO - LONG LAKE MUSIC FESTIVAL

BEETHOVEN



BEETHOVEN

PIANO TRIO IN D MAJOR "GHOST"
PIANO TRIO IN B FLAT MAJOR "ARCHDUKE"

Min-Young Kim (violin), Mihai Marica (cello), Mihae Lee (piano)

MAJESTIC MAINSTAGE SERIES

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11
MAJESTIC THEATRE, 36 MAIN STREET, CONWAY, NH

7:30 PERFORMANCE
PRE-CONCERT TALK BY GEORGE WIESE AT 6:15

WWW.MOUNTAINTOPMUSIC.ORG/CONCERT-SERIES (603) 447-4737

Demos and faculty member Justin Ramos in May, and the Soggy Po Boys mayhem-filled bluegrass tunes in June. All that, and a special home concert with popular violinist Omar Chen Guey and his equally talented pianist wife Lin Guey in an evening of Brazilian music and a dazzling arrangement of Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story Suite, brought FY2022 to a most successful close.

The Mainstage Series offerings, as well as the home and public concerts, are made possible by the generosity of a broad swath of community members who lend financial support via sponsorships and attendance to our Concert programs and to our major fundraising events, especially our Spring Gala hosted this past May by Stone Mountain Arts Center and featuring Singer Susie Pepper and her Mixology Band in a fabulous tribute evening to the music of the James Bond films.

THE MAJESTIC CAFÉ

Live music was back and on everyone's radar, as was a new Mountain Top initiative: a Jazz and Blues club in one of our storefronts quickly dubbed the Majestic Café, and serving up wine, beer, selected spirits, and a different performer every week, completely staffed and run by Mountain Top volunteers! "If you build it, they will come," someone

once said, and they did. So far, there have been more than 50 Friday nights of superb jazz and blues right here on Main Street in Conway village, with no let-up in sight. Musicians who helped make the first year of the Café a success by bringing their own talent and recruiting their friends to come and play with them were Al Hospers, Heather Pierson, Dan Moore, Mike Hathaway, Ken & Laurie Turley, Michael Beling, Gary Wittner, Jed Wilson, and members of the Mountain Top faculty. Some listeners might have believed they were on 54th St in NYC if they closed their eyes for moment or two.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Clearly, more great concerts of music from near and far, as well as shows from our partners at Arts in Motion Theatre Company and the Cold River Radio Show, plus a lot of hard work are ahead! Curtaining, more and better stage lighting, and sound attenuation for the Majestic as we learn about its acoustics with various kinds of music and different audience sizes are also planned. We hope to be able to expand performances in the Café to include an occasional Cabaret night or Folk concert in addition to Friday night's Jazz and Blues. Last but not least, occasional special Film Nights, focused primarily on musicals or movies with music themes, are something the community can look forward to in future years, once we get the funds to purchase state-of-the art, and I might add, costly, equipment to show them properly.

So, "stay tuned" as the musicians say; keep an eye on the Majestic marque, the local newspapers, and Mountain Top's monthly ENews to see announcements and details of "what's new and what's next." We very much look forward to seeing you at the Theatre, in the Café, and perhaps even taking a lesson upstairs at the Music School.

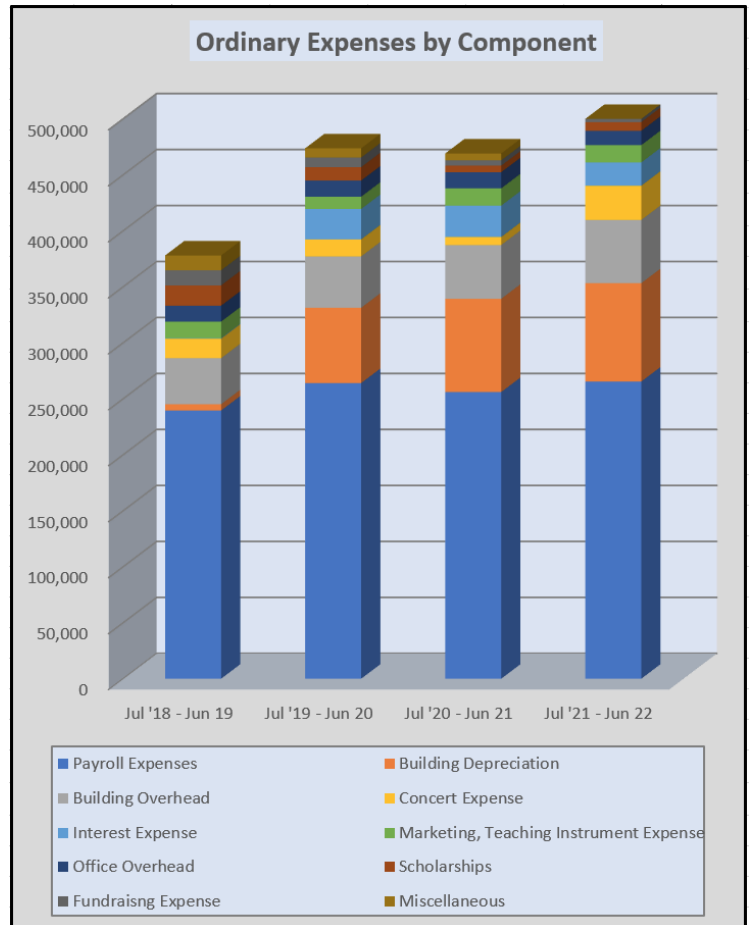
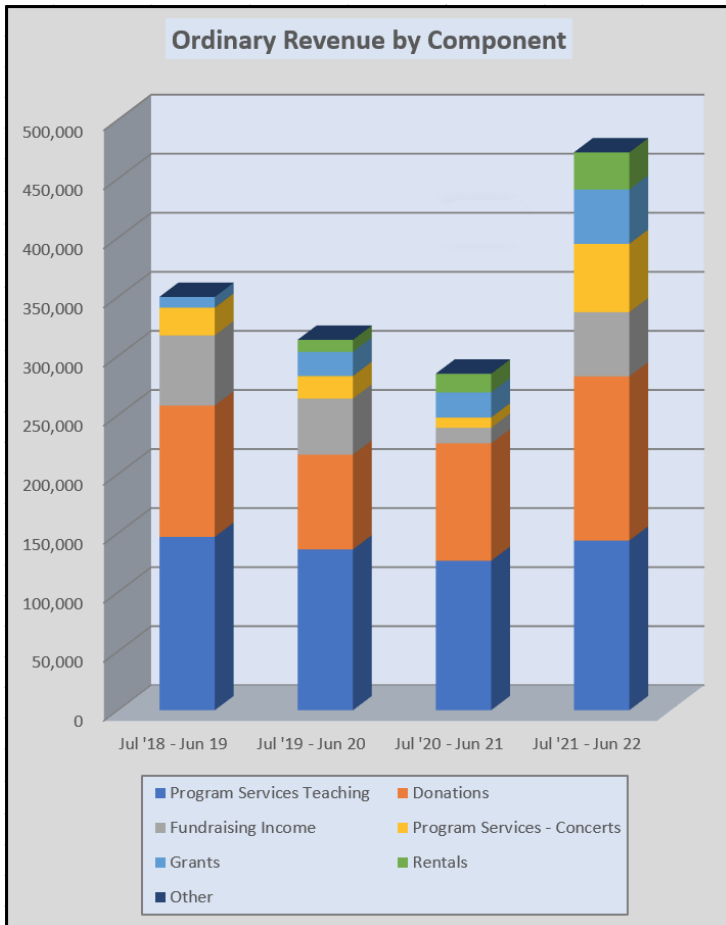
The Mountain Top Music Concert Committee

MAJESTIC CAFE



JAZZ & BLUES EVERY FRIDAY 7PM

Financial Report



Note: Extraordinary and/or non-recurring income and expenses are excluded, including Covid support such as PPP, insurance claims, and restricted gifts whose restrictions have not lapsed.

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