

# NEWS *from* FESTIVAL HILL

2012 WAS A BANNER YEAR FOR ROUND TOP FESTIVAL INSTITUTE

Volume 1, Issue 2 - Winter, 2012

## THE HOLIDAYS AT FESTIVAL HILL

For the first time in Round Top the Texas Master Chorale – a hundred voices strong – performed traditional holiday music and an excerpt from Handel's *Messiah* on December 8. Following the performance was the annual Christmas Open House. On December 15, a sell-out crowd enjoyed the favorite holiday ballet, *The Nutcracker*. Festival Hill will ring in 2013 with its New Year's Gala starting at 7:30 PM on December 31st. Start the 2013 season at Festival Hill with Alain Déclert in recital on the organ in Edythe Bates Old Chapel at 3 PM on January 19th, a performance of Bach generously underwritten by the Alice Taylor Gray Foundation.

## PERFORMANCES AND FORUMS

Greetings from the editors of *News from Festival Hill* and welcome to Issue 2. We began 2012 in lively fashion with the Houston Brass and followed that with a Valentine's celebration of the Art of American Song with Dick Smith and Friends. This winter look for the Valentine Concert on Saturday, February 9, instead of mid-week. This always-a-good-time concert is followed by another Festival Hill tradition, the Library Book Event, which helps build the collections available here, including important Texana works. When you see Barbara, Robert, and Darryl Tocker, know that they and the Tocker Foundation deserve a high-five for their support to date on the capital improvements to our library, which when finished will bring an important new feature to this campus. Betty Stieren Kelso has played a significant role in the library progress as well, as has the Lola Wright Foundation. We have an exciting new development: Barry Moore, President of the Faith P. and Charles L. Bybee Foundation, has announced just in the past month that the Foundation has made an important gift to the Round Top Festival Institute to advance the library completion. As a

result of these philanthropic efforts, we are well on our way to having space where scholars and visitors can explore our library holdings.

Late winter often brings a solo concert performance from our Founder and Artistic Director, James Dick. In 2012 he played Beethoven, Brahms and Debussy. He next performs at Festival Hill on February 16, 2013. The concert will be at 3 PM that day. Consider bringing a group to dine here before or after the concert. We can make arrangements in Menke House for groups of 20 or more.

In 2012 two Saturday music festivals, the Guitar Festival and Percussion Galore, rounded out the spring concerts. In 2013 we will have two concerts for each festival, both in the afternoon. If you like classical



guitar, know how fun it is to enjoy the excellent sight lines and acoustics that set off solo performances and ensembles in the Festival Concert Hall. Plan to join us at Festival Hill on Saturday, March 2. The Bryan-based Gilbert and Thyra Plass Arts Foundation continues to make possible the wonderful Guitar Festival under the leadership of Tony Morris, host of *Classical Guitar Alive* heard on over 200 radio stations across the country. Some of you will know about the lives of the Plasses, but for those who don't, we wanted to share the following biographical information that appears on their Foundation Website:

### Thyra Plass (1914–2003)

Dr. Thyra Plass grew up on a farm in Illinois where she took piano lessons and first discovered her love for music. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music criticism from the University of Chi-

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cago and a doctorate in organ performance and sacred music from Union Theological Seminary in New York. Thyra never lost her love for either her family farm or music of substance and artistry. Along with her husband, Gilbert, Dr. Plass was responsible for much of both the quantity and quality of art and music in our community.



## **Gilbert Plass (1920–2004)**

Dr. Gilbert Plass earned a BS from Harvard, where he graduated summa cum laude, and a doctorate in physics from Princeton. He worked on the Manhattan Project at both the University of Chicago and Los Alamos. Dr. Plass was head of the Department of Physics at Texas A&M University (1968–1977) and was the first to confirm that adding CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere would increase infrared radiation absorbed and thus cause global warming. Dr. Plass was as knowledgeable and passionate about the arts as he was about physics.



This glimpse of two wonderful supporters of music hints at the outstanding accomplishments of many who come to hear music and participate in forums. The backgrounds of a lot of our champions at Festival Hill include a knowledge and love of music, a deep capacity for lifelong learning, and the ability to contribute significantly to our civilization. The friends who gather here for performances, festivals and forums provide inspiration for our ongoing work to foster the arts and humanities.

To say a bit more about our Spring Festivals, Percussion Festival advisor and concert marimbist, Thomas Burritt, is active in the creation and performance of new music for percussion, and this is always an excellent day of music adventure. Come experience the magic of percussion at Festival Hill on April 13.

March 22-23 is when people with a love for gardens and herbs will gather for the Herbal Forum. This is typically a sell-out occasion, so register early. In recent years, horseradish, dill and roses (yes, a rose is an herb) have been in the spotlight. This coming spring the focus will be the *Fruitful Herbal Harvest*. Festival Hill Garden Director Henry Flowers says of

the plans, “We’ll look at the use of elderberry, Herb of the Year in 2013, and many other useful fruit plants. Some of our presenters will be Matt Turner, author of *Remarkable Plants of Texas*, Gayle Engles of the American Botanical Council in Austin and Christine Moore, curator of the National Herb Garden at National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. In addition to lectures, we’ll have plant and gift sales, a book store and herbal demonstrations.”

It’s no surprise that poetry is one of the Festival offerings at Festival Hill. Many elements link poetry and music, perhaps most obviously rhythm. For April 26-28, co-director of the Poetry Festival, Jack Brannon, reports that the planners of the 12th annual Poetry at Round Top have put together a remarkable line up of presenters, including Tony Hoagland, Brian Turner, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Kawame Dawes, Pattiann Rogers, Kazim Ali, Naomi Shihab Nye, Laurie Ann Guerrero, Nick Courtright and Joe Ahearn. More information will soon be available at [poetryatroundtop.org](http://poetryatroundtop.org) or from the Institute office at 979-249-3129. Also, see our website at [festivalhill.org](http://festivalhill.org).

## **Planning for the Year Ahead**

Trustees of Round Top Festival Institute gathered here recently for their fall board meeting and will hold a day-long retreat in January. When asked about recommendations for charitable and financial planning, several of our board members who have financial expertise had this consensus thought to share: “Charitable investment always matters.”

Your charitable focus can make a world of difference for Festival Hill.

A special thank you to The Burdine Johnson Foundation, Festival Hill season sponsor.

If you would like information about performance underwriting, young artist scholarship support or legacy giving, please let us know.



## **ROUND TOP FESTIVAL INSTITUTE**

PO Box 89 • 248 Jaster Road  
Round Top, TX 78954

**(979) 249-3129 • [festivalhill.org](http://festivalhill.org)**