

NEWS *from* FESTIVAL HILL

LIFE, LOVE & MUSIC

Volume 5, Issue 2 - Fall, 2016



in a word, unbelievable. Incredibly sophisticated, it was executed with the precision of a Shaolin monk. This was not the same orchestra that had come together six weeks ago. In a week's time, St. Clair had managed to lead this group into the upper echelon of transcendent performances.

Cheers for Sasha Cooke

On July 9 at 7:30 pm, the Festival Concert Hall was graced with the lovely and gregarious Sasha Cooke. The stage lit up as she took her place before the orchestra. Her natural personality would do that to any stage, but at eight months expecting, her glow was supernatural—a perfect

Opening Concert Splash

This summer, the Round Top Festival Institute put on an unprecedented and thrilling music festival! The young artists from across the U.S. and 11 other countries, who together made up the 2016 Texas Festival Orchestra, under the direction of Christoph Campestrini, gave us a tremendously phenomenal performance at the end of the first week. The opening piece of the Beethoven Celebration! concert featured Founder & Artistic Director, James Dick, at the piano and the Texas Master Chorale in Beethoven's *Fantasia for Piano, Chorale, and Orchestra, Op. 80*.

The poised and noble performances by James Dick and the Texas Master Chorale, combined with the buoyant energy of the newly formed orchestra, set the stage for the second half of the performance. The 2016 Texas Festival Orchestra and the Texas Master Chorale really knocked it out of the park at the bottom of this ninth with their performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to making the opening gala performance a reality! Your support of the Round Top Music Festival means so much to us, but especially to the Young Artists who come each year to enjoy six weeks with world-class faculty and conductors to make music for the world.

Carl St. Clair and the Festival Closing Concert

If the opening gala concert was a home run, the closing concert at the end of the sixth week was certainly a grand slam! The Lone Star state shined brightly with the light of two Texas stars that night. Hoccheim, Texas native, Carl St. Clair and fellow University of Texas Distinguished Alumnus, James Dick began the concert with a once-in-a-lifetime performance with Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto No. 5 that was truly breathtaking.

After a suspenseful intermission, Maestro St. Clair greeted the audience with a genial thanks for his return to Festival Hill. He had conducted here previously in 1995 and 1996. Then he spoke about Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 10*, leaving everyone in the audience on the edge of their seats. The performance itself was,

state to coincide with her alto role in Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth) in which she transcends to a sort of earth-mother goddess!

A native of College Station, Sasha is the region's hometown hero. She studied voice at Rice University and The Juilliard School. She performs with many of the greatest companies, like the Houston Grand Opera and the San Francisco Opera and is a regular feature in the *New York Times*. We were very fortunate to sidetrack her from her busy schedule for a moment here in Round Top. Later this season she will be singing in Verdi's *Requiem* with HGO, then in Mahler's *3rd Symphony* in Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Santa Fe!

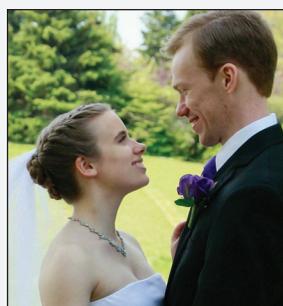


William Burden, Sasha Cooke and Vladimir Kulenovic.

It was a real pleasure listening to Sasha alongside William Burden. The two of them displayed an amazing chemistry on stage with the orchestra and Maestro Vladimir Kulenovic. If you missed the concert with Sasha Cooke, you can watch and enjoy it and many of our performances wherever you are, online. Visit our YouTube channel at [YouTube.com/RoundTopFestivalInstitute](https://www.youtube.com/RoundTopFestivalInstitute), and don't forget to subscribe!

Meet the Steigerwalds - Our Newlywed Alumni

There is always some aspect of the festival that makes it a uniquely magical experience. This past festival was especially enchanted by the presence of one young couple who traveled all the way from upstate New York to spend their honeymoon with us. Thomas and Shannon Steigerwald, both young musicians who had applied to attend the music festival this summer, met at a church in Rochester,



(Continued on back)

New York while attending the Eastman School of Music in November of last year. Their wedding in late May left little time for the customary honeymoon. So, on June 4, the newlyweds arrived at RTFI to participate in the festival and share their wedding cake with their class.

They brought a sparkling energy to the stage and to their peers in the orchestra. Shannon recalled one special moment on stage when the two had performed in the annual Young Persons' Concert with Shannon as concertmaster and Thomas at the piano. It is a great partnership indeed, when a violinist and pianist find love.

After the festival, the couple spent some time visiting each other's families in Texas and Connecticut. Thomas, a native of Uvalde, TX, is now pursuing his Master's degree at The Juilliard School, while Shannon is finishing her degree at Eastman. We wish them the very best!

Weddings at Festival Hill

Festival Hill is the destination for a country wedding in Texas with venues like the Edythe Bates Old Chapel, The Albert and Ethel Herzstein Memorial Plaza, and the Victorian-style Menke House! The chapel was built in 1883 and moved to Festival Hill in 1994. Lovingly restored, it seats 160 guests and is the perfect location for your very special and intimate wedding. Our Albert and Ethel Herzstein Memorial Plaza is a fabulous, serene location for any reception. Its beauty and majesty are accentuated by the waterfalls and reclaimed statues from around the world.

After securing a date, you can have your outdoor portraits taken here on campus free of charge, with a small fee for indoor shoots. There are many amazing locations on our campus for that perfect photo.

One of the many benefits of having your wedding at Festival Hill is the overnight accommodations we offer. Your guests can enjoy your big day, then retire to one of our comfortable rooms. Just imagine your wedding day surrounded by family and friends and the beauty of nature. Contact our Wedding Site Coordinator, Stephanie Van Dresar, to schedule a tour of our campus today.

Festival Concert Hall Topic of Forum

On the evening of August 25, a gathering from the community of Round Top met in the Festival Concert Hall. They had come for the special FYI forum organized by the Round Top Family Library, which varies its meeting place depending on the topic. This evening's topic was the genesis and evolution of the concert hall—an architectural marvel that takes everyone's breath away when they enter it for the first time.

On this particular evening, Round Top Festival Institute Founder and Artistic Director, James Dick and master carpenter, Larry Birkelbach, sat on the stage before the curious audience and shared their experience of building the world-class concert hall. Birkelbach, who was hired as a carpenter at Festival Hill 45 years ago, stated, "There were no drawings except for ones in sawdust or



Larry Birkelbach and James Dick answer audience questions about the construction of the Festival Concert Hall.

on pieces of cardboard. The ideas of Jimmy, Richard and Lamar are what you see," referring also to Richard Royall, Managing Director and Lamar Lentz, Associate Managing Director.

Construction began on the 1,000 seat Festival Concert Hall in 1981. The interior of the hall is comprised of strategically placed hard and soft woods to augment and deflect sound. Countless pieces of wood assembled into elaborate stars, octagons, diamonds and gothic panels enhance both beauty and resonance. Every inch of the concert hall was carefully thought out and crafted to create the large "instrument" that it is today. The acoustics are phenomenal, with musical notes traveling to every niche of the hall without the need for amplification.

The hall is the focus of the Festival Hill campus and the site of over 800 concerts. Concertgoers are reminded of similar European structures by the ornate woodwork, grand staircases, hand-crafted chandeliers and attention to detail inherent in the design—the result of grand vision, seemingly impossible challenges, infinite patience and master craftsmanship. Dick and Birkelbach agree "the impossible only takes longer to accomplish." Details on the construction of the Festival Concert Hall are online at festivalhill.org.

August-to-April Series: Upcoming Events

Celil Refik Kaya, Guitar October 8, 2016 - 3:00 PM

Theatre Forum November 4 - 6, 2016

University of Texas Wind Ensemble
November 19, 2016 - 3:00 PM

PraiSingers Holiday Choral Concert and Open House
December 3, 2016 - 3:00 PM

Nutcracker Ballet December 10, 2016 - 4:00 PM

Texas Guitar Quartet January 21, 2017 - 3:00 PM

Valentine's Concert with Dick Smith & Friends
February 11, 2017 - 2:00 PM

James Dick in Concert March 4, 2017 - 3:00 PM

22nd Annual Herbal Forum at Round Top
March 17 & 18, 2017

Piano Duo: Elena Martin and Jose Meliton
April 8, 2017 - 3:00 PM

Poetry at Round Top April 21 - 23, 2017

NEWS *from* FESTIVAL HILL
Editor: Sergio Lozano



ROUND TOP FESTIVAL INSTITUTE

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

(979) 249-3129 • FestivalHill.org

[Facebook.com/RoundTopFestivalInstitute](https://www.facebook.com/RoundTopFestivalInstitute)

Twitter and Instagram @RTFIInstitute

Contact: info@festivalhill.org