

LA GRUA CENTER
2015-16 ANNUAL REPORT



Transitions

This has been a pivotal year at La Grua Center. In addition to celebrating the accomplishments of our very capable executive director, Jane Meiser, who announced that she would be stepping down at the end of the year, we also welcomed Jane's talented successor, Lori Robishaw, to her new post. While some transitions in leadership can be stressful and chaotic, ours at La Grua Center has remained orderly as we move forward with prudence, resolve, and clarity of purpose.

Honoring Jane for her many contributions has given us an opportunity to reflect on the center's numerous accomplishments during her five-year period of leadership. Chief among them have been the increased breadth of our offerings and the scores of new faces who have passed through our doors. Our programming in the areas of music, lectures, dance, art exhibits, and fitness classes has garnered unprecedented interest throughout the region, and our improved website and expanded use of social media have further helped us inform and engage area residents. We are also delighted that Kelli Rocherolle, our program director, has moved to full-time status.

Pleased as we are with the center's evolution under Jane's direction, Lori brings a different set of experiences and ideas to this leadership position. In recent weeks she has begun to help us frame some of the most critical questions about the center's future and the financial resources that will be required to move our organization forward. We are indeed fortunate to have Lori as such an important member of our team.

And finally, I am pleased to report that Lori will be working closely with Paul Leeming who steps into my position as board president at our annual meeting this fall. While it has been my privilege to serve in this capacity during such an exciting period in the life of our young organization, Paul takes over with an in-depth appreciation for what has made La Grua Center so special. Under Paul and Lori's leadership, the center will continue to explore new opportunities in community programming and will remain ever-mindful of La Grua Center's growing importance in the lives of area residents.

Peter Castle

President, Board of Directors

Snapshot

Masterful performers presenting selections from the classical canon and the return of hometown favorites **Nora Fox** and **Hilary Castle** highlighted our music presentations this past year, along with musical explorations of **Africa**, **Bulgaria**, and **Ireland**. Our distinguished lecturers took us to **Bhutan**, **Ukraine**, **Plum Island**, and **The Cloisters**, while we learned more about **drones**, **climate change**, a **famous art heist**, and the **origins of Christmas**. We hosted our first photography exhibition and a series of printmaking workshops, and again, a talented group of local artists shared their expertise in our **5th Annual Kids Summer** and **Holiday Art Workshops**. Our signature monthly series, *Music Matters*, included pianist **Matthew Odell** in an all Brahms program, **The Trombones** from the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, classic bluegrass with the **Hope Valley Volunteers**, and repeat engagements with pianist **Stephen Porter** in an all Debussy program and the **New York Classical Quartet**, joined by a basset clarinet in Mozart's *Clarinet Quintet*. Our interest in the future was once again demonstrated as we hosted the **Mystic Middle School Jazz Band and Chorus**.



By the Numbers

We presented nearly thirty concerts, forty lectures, seven art exhibitions, and six weekly wellness and dance classes — welcoming more than 10,000 people through our doors.

Partnership

We continue to build upon the important relationships with our nonprofit cultural neighbors, especially the **Stonington Historical Society**, **Stonington Free Library**, and **James Merrill House**, which all use the center regularly for their programming. Some highlights from them this past year — the history of basketball in Stonington with Dave Erskine, *The Eastern Question* with Ted Danforth, the myriad collections of the Mystic Seaport with Fred Calabretta, prominent authors Amy Bloom and Julia Glass — and many more.



Highlights

MASQUERADE



Masks have been around since antiquity, being used for disguise, protection, performance, and ceremony. Last year, we presented a



mask-making workshop, a pop-up art exhibit with spellbinding masks from around the world, and a festive winter evening of music and dance raising funds for the center.



TAPESTRIES

Mary Merrill (1921-1999) was married to poet and Stonington resident James Merrill's half-brother Charles Merrill, Jr. She was a longtime member of the Weavers Guild of



Boston, and her tapestries have been exhibited throughout New England. She became a tapestry artist late in life, and we were pleased to meet her children, Amy and Paul (pictured), who helped us coordinate the exhibit.

PAINTED PRAYERS

This exhibit of Buddhist art featured an amazing collection of sacred Tibetan thangka paintings by Lama Tsonдру Sangpo. Thangkas are traditionally used as objects of devotion or as an aid to spiritual practice and are a source of blessings to all who see them. The art form dates back over 2,500 years and



depicts deities in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Prior to the exhibit opening, the Lama performed a blessing and presented a white ceremonial scarf to both Jane and Kelli.



STONINGTON SOUNDS

For the second year, we presented our day-long concert festival, **Stonington Sounds**. The series hosted eleven different groups — from Portuguese fado to jazz to classical harpsichord — in seven different venues throughout Stonington Borough. We're grateful to our festival sponsors Breakwater, Dime Bank, Dog Watch Café, Engine Room, Fishing Vessel Heritage and the Williams Family, Oyster Club, and Zuckermann Harpsichord.



Our Volunteers

We owe a big “thank you” to all our artist and other volunteers who came out every Sunday in July to make our **Kid’s Summer Art Workshop** possible: Karin Bastidas, Carmel Bourneuf, Sadie DeVore, Tom Frohnapfel, Barbara Ginsberg, Judy Keegan, Eva Leong, Vin Loiacono, Juan O’Callahan, Muireann O’Callaghan, and Dan Potter.



All of our programming is made possible by the dedication of our volunteer programming committees and our presenters. As always, we extend our gratitude for their donated time and personal commitment to La Grua Center.

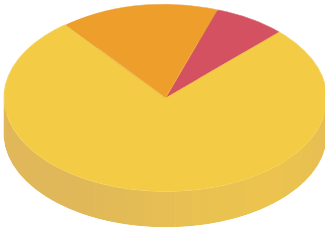
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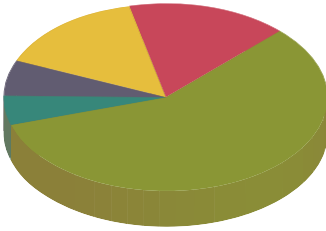
Financials



Income

- Direct Contributions \$ 150,955
- Program Related Sales and Fees 32,365
- Fundraisers 13,545

- TOTAL \$ 196,865**



Expenses

- Payroll Expenses \$ 106,320
- Marketing & Support 9,455
- Insurance & Office Related 11,170
- Facility and Equipment 26,770
- Programming 28,500

- TOTAL \$ 182,215***

*Does not include depreciation of \$28,630



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Donors

We would like to thank the following donors who make our community programming possible with their financial support. We also receive anonymous cash donations at the door for many of our events and we thank all those donors as well. All donations to La Grua Center were made between the dates of July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016.

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While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, please accept our sincere apology if there are any errors or omissions with your name. If your listing requires correction, please let us know.



LA GRUA CENTER

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STONINGTON, CT 06378

www.lagruacenter.org

La Grua Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

COVER: ARRIVAL OF DUSK BY HAJIME TAGUCHI IN LA GRUA CENTER'S CELEBRATING ART IN AUTISM EXHIBIT