

LA GRUA CENTER

2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT





This Year at La Grua

I'll admit that I lost some sleep in the early days of this fiscal year—and for once I won't blame my early rising children. What kept me up was the specter of transition at La Grua—a sense of disquiet like that momentary choppiness when tides turn, the chaos of a shift change, or the uncertainty of a new political order.

Transition was on my mind for many reasons. Because of term limits, we would face the departures of founding board members Dorothy Papp, Peter Castle, and Sarah Janssens. We would welcome a new executive director asking her to plug seamlessly into an unfamiliar organization. We would wrestle with questions about our identity, mission, and sustainability. And with all of this as a backdrop, we would set an ambitious agenda befitting our coming tenth anniversary season.

But what I quickly realized as the year progressed was that the weight and worry of change would not be borne on the shoulders of this new president alone, but rather carried lightly and expertly by the many hands of La Grua.

This will come as no surprise to all of you who understand and cherish the strength of our community. It's the spirit

we all feel as we gather on a weekend night to share in the talent of a performer, it's the camaraderie in an exercise class or the laughter of children in a workshop, it's what compels volunteers to stack chairs or join committees, it's what spawns partnerships between local organizations within our walls, it's the impulse to pass wisdom on to new leaders, and it's the force that draws each of us out of our cloistered worlds and into an old foundry together with friends and strangers expecting something wonderful.

In fact, "something wonderful" is how I would describe the contents of this year's annual report. Under the guidance of Lori Robishaw, Kelli Rocherolle, and our board of directors, and thanks to the generosity of those listed on our donor pages [and](#) to so many more who contribute in their own way, we've turned transition into accomplishment and opportunity.

And so I'll let the following pages speak for themselves but leave you with my profound thanks and confidence in what's to come.

Paul Leeming
President, Board of Directors

Snapshot

Our monthly signature series, *Music Matters*, included hometown treasure, violinist **Hilary Castle**, in a full-house return engagement as part of a Romantic piano trio; pianists **Shuann Chai and Artem Belogurov** playing two-hands and four-hands; chamber music with New York's **Omni Piano Quartet**; Mystic musicians Jeff and Anne Barnhart as **Ivory & Gold** on piano and flute; Baroque music from **Kleine Kammermusik**; and **Roosevelt Dime**, playing their distinct brand of American roots music.

At our podium were talks about climbing **Antarctica's highest peak**, fighting **gender issues in Hollywood**, going beyond the headlines in **the Middle East**, as well as learning about an Arab-Israeli shared society and growing up under **apartheid in South Africa**. We presented return engagements from some of our favorite musicians—the multi-talented **Nora Fox**, singer-songwriters **Bergin O'Malley and Jesse Terry**, harpsichordist **Elena Zamolodchikova**, and the Irish band **Executive Sesiún**. Our walls were graced with art from **Lords Hill Studio** artists and the **Northeastern Connecticut Artists Guild**, and our annual **Stonington Artists** show.

We launched the *Military Matters* series, which began with a submarine art exhibit



ELENA ZAMOLODCHIKOVA

and a talk from a retired submarine captain. Once again a talented group of local artists shared their expertise in our **6th Annual Kids Summer and Holiday Art Workshops**, and we presented the **Celebrating Art in Autism** exhibit. Hosting the annual concerts of the **Mystic Middle School Jazz Band and Chorus** continues to be an investment in the artists and audiences of tomorrow.

By the Numbers

We presented nearly thirty concerts; some forty lectures, films, poetry readings, and panel discussions; eight art exhibitions and one craft fair; and six weekly wellness and dance classes—welcoming more than 10,000 visitors through our doors.



LEFT: HILARY CASTLE



RIGHT: "NEWS FROM HOME" BY GEORGES SCHREIBER FROM THE NAVY ART COLLECTION.

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 included...the 15th anniversary of 9/11 with Scott Bates, a look at a painter's life with Stone Roberts, the attack on Stonington Harbor with Patricia Oat and the lives of local service members with Dave Erskine, prominent authors Louise Gluck and Lorrie Moore...and many more. As Stonington Borough wrestles with future governance issues, we were also pleased to host several more BoroVision talks.

Highlights



BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Dog lovers and Broadway mavens were treated to a talk by Tony Award-recipient Bill Berloni, who got his start 40 years ago training the very first "Sandy," the dog in the musical *Annie*, which started at Goodspeed Musicals. We went "backstage" with Bill as he introduced us to some of the furry friends who helped give him this unique career.



WWI: WAR LETTERS

April marked the 100th anniversary of America's involvement with World War I, and along with the Stonington Historical Society, we presented an exhibit of WWI letters, photographs, and memorabilia collected from residents around the region and the historical society's archives. Andrew Carroll, the *New York Times* best-selling author and founder of The Center for American War Letters, talked about his quest for collecting one million war letters when he discussed his latest book about General John Pershing and WWI. We also learned about the American volunteer ambulance drivers in France before America entered the war from George King of the Ambulance 255 Project.

FATHER AND SON



Actor/pianist Chris Lemmon regaled us with stories of growing up with his father, Oscar-winner Jack Lemmon, in his one-man show, *Twist of Lemmon*, our winter fundraiser.

STONINGTON SOUNDS

For the third year—the first with good weather—we presented our day-long summer music festival, **Stonington Sounds**, this time anchored at La Grua Center and on

our adjacent green. We hosted six eclectic performances—a Mark Twain-inspired piano concert, the U.S. Coast Guard Dixieland Jazz Band, a concert for kids, Portuguese fado, classical harpsichord, and a jazz trio.



BERGIN O'MALLEY



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 **Kids Summer Art Workshop** possible: Karin Bastidas, Carmel Bourneuf, Sadie DeVore, Tom Frohnapfel, Barbara Ginsberg, Eva Leong, Vin Loiacono, Bunny O’Callahan, Muireann O’Callaghan, Bergin O’Malley, Dan Potter, and J.J. Tillinghast Sinton. And this year, we especially want to acknowledge the passing of the wonderful **Juan O’Callahan**, whose energy and enthusiasm began this program six years ago.

All of our programming is made possible by the dedication of our volunteer advisory committees and office/event volunteers, as well as the many presenters who give us compelling lectures. As always, we extend our gratitude for their donated time and personal commitment to La Grua Center.

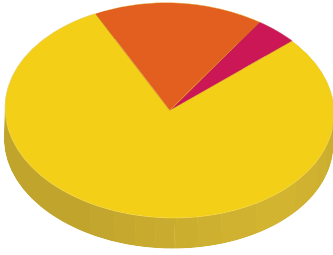
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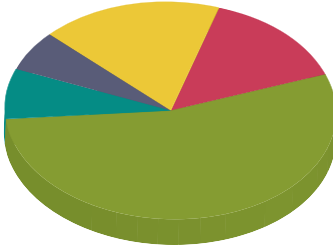
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Bergin O’Malley
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Stonington Garden Club

Financials



Income

Direct Contributions	\$ 162,790
Program Related Sales and Fees	34,342
Fundraisers (net)	8,256
TOTAL	\$ 205,388



Expenses

Payroll Expenses	\$ 111,365
Marketing & Support	15,445
Insurance & Office Related	12,315
Facility & Equipment	36,161
Programming	29,484
TOTAL	\$ 204,770*

*Does not include depreciation of \$29,393



Board of Directors and Staff

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BETSY JAMES LOOKS AT HER MOTHER'S
 WAR LETTERS AND PHOTOS FROM
 FRANCE IN 1919

*We also thank the families
 of Shelley White and Juan
 O'Callahan, who named La
 Grua Center as a recipient of
 memorial gifts.*

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