

Stamford Symphony
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NEWS

Darien man, whose love of music invigorated Stamford Symphony, to step down

Jarret Liotta

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— Darien resident Alan McIntyre is chairman of the board of directors of the Stamford Symphony.
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STAMFORD — While he continues to achieve success in the international business arena, Darien resident Alan McIntyre still sees incredible value in the far-reaching power of music.

After six dedicated years as chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Stamford Symphony, this month McIntyre will step down from that role to let fresh perspectives see the future.



“Organizations always benefit from fresh ideas,” McIntyre, who will continue to serve on the board going forward, but is passing on the baton of leadership, said.

“It felt to me like the right time to step down,” he said, noting he was glad to have kept the helm through a key transitional time for the organization.

At the heart of McIntyre’s work during his tenure was the search for both a new CEO to follow the retirement of Barbara Smith Soroca, as well as the search for a new music director in Michael Stern.

“Alan was the right man at the right time,” Soroca, who began with the symphony as its general manager in 1979 and completed a 39-year career there, said.

She described McIntyre as the dream chairman and a Renaissance man with a deep love and knowledge of American history — especially unique for someone born in Scotland.

She also applauded his tireless work ethic, which personally includes family, consulting work, extensive traveling, and service to several other organizations, including The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, The Institute of Contemporary Scotland, and his alma mater, Glasgow University.

“During this time he was also raising a family of four amazing children,” she said, “taking them on individual special trips, writing for a Scottish magazine and countless other activities.”

When he and his family first moved to Darien in 2005, a business colleague suggested McIntyre turn his ongoing interest in the arts toward supporting the Stamford Symphony. He joined its board in 2010.

“I’ve always been interested in music,” he said, having been trained on piano and also sporting a massive library of recordings that include a great deal of classical.

Ironically the lengthy shutdown of the pandemic reminded him of how much he cherishes live musical performances.



“I had forgotten how different it was to sit and be surrounded by the music and have the vibrancy of that live performance,” he said, thrilled that the symphony started back in person with a relatively smaller ensemble this past spring.

“It is as much a physical experience as a listening experience,” he said, with the sense of community that accompanies a live performance a key part.

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“He’s been an incredible leader,” Russell Jones, who succeeded Soroca as president and CEO under McIntyre’s watch in 2017, said.

Jones remembered how, when he first took the job, McIntyre flatly stated that he would leave him alone for three months and let him get settled.

“That’s exactly what he did,” Jones said, pointing out how bad chairs interfere with the minutia of the staff and daily functioning, while McIntyre had the wisdom to trust the people under his leadership and let them do their jobs.

Susan Lorentsen, chair of the Orchestra Players Committee, likewise commended McIntyre on his management skills.



“He understands the importance of building bridges between orchestra members, management and board members,” she said. “And he know the most effective and appropriate approach to each of those groups, helping to unify them in supporting programs that help to move the Stamford Symphony forward.”

She also noted how his classical musical knowledge has played a key role in his ability to communicate.

“His level of understanding of what we do has most certainly garnered respect within the orchestra community,” she said.

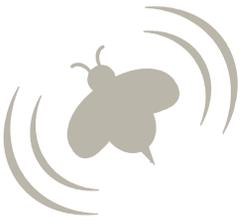
“He has put tremendous energy and resources into growing the orchestra,” Lorentsen said, “and finding a path forward to make classical music meaningful and relevant to audiences in the 21st century.”

McIntyre, along with his wife, Maria, has passed his knowledge and passion for music on to their four children, including Catriona, a violinist, Ross, a bass guitar player, and Logan and Grant, both of whom are accomplished tenor saxophonists.

“I’m a great believer that music activates different parts of the brain (and studying music helps with your general education,” McIntyre said, having encouraged his children in that direction.

“And they get dragged along to the symphony every so often as well,” he said.

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Jones pointed out how important this is because it increases opportunities for the Stamford Symphony to further raise its quality of performance, and to become even more involved in other parts of Fairfield County, with special appearances and educational outreach.

"You will see our footprint in Fairfield County become significantly greater in the coming years," Jones said. "We call ourselves the Stamford Symphony, but we are really the Fairfield County Orchestra."

"Part of the mission for the organization is to be not only serving Stamford, but also the surrounding area," McIntyre concurred.

While many nonprofits have struggled through the pandemic, he gratefully acknowledged that the donors have been generous with the symphony, giving it a robust emergence into the coming year.

"Our subscribers and our donors have really stepped up and supported us," he said.

But McIntyre wholeheartedly believes in what the symphony has to offer local residents such as himself, and appears just as grateful to have it so close to Darien.

"We bring truly great musicians to you here," he said, "and you can avoid the train and the traffic and come hear a fantastic orchestra ... here in your backyard."