

ArtsMatters

SHOWCASING THE ARTS IN THE MORRIS AREA



2019-2020

Still dazzling First Night® Morris County marks its 28th season

December 31, 2019 marks the 28th year of New Jersey's biggest and brightest First Night, a New Year's Eve family-friendly, alcohol-free celebration of the arts – with more than 100 artists, 44 events in 16 venues – representing dance, theatre, music, world cultures, visual arts and children's programs. For all 28 years, Morris Arts has been First Night Morris' artistic programmer, securing topflight talents who attract thousands from throughout the state and beyond. More than half of the program features new artists (or artists returning after several years), many of whom have performed at world class venues, won international recognition, performed on national radio/TV, in major films and/or collaborated with superstars of performing arts. On that night, one can experience everything from Korean drum dancers, a visit with "Mark Twain," and a mind-reading mentalist, to award-winning jazz pianists, topflight comedians, virtuoso Chinese instrumentalists, adventures with a pirate queen and even a live reptile show.

On the **Rock/R&B/Drum** front, **The Tones** deliver that terrific blend of classic Rock, R&B and "Three Chords and the Truth," recrafting the music they love as they draw on music by the Eagles, Van Morrison, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Tom Petty, Ray Charles and the Allman brothers. Rock your way into the new decade with this terrific band. Got rhythm? Connect with **Dana McCurdy's Community In Rhythm Drum Circle**, where you can channel your inner beat with this participatory drum circle.

Hankering for **Jazz**? What a treat to bring the trio of **Ben Rosenblum**, an impressive, award-winning jazz pianist from NYC who's already soloed at Carnegie Hall, performed at Lincoln Center, California's Kuumbwa Jazz Center, the Library of Congress and other top venues. Regularly honored by *Downbeat*, he and his trio tour throughout USA, Canada, Europe and Japan. Of course, First

Night would not be complete without our own Morristown star, the sizzling jazz pianist, **Rio Clemente** (the "**Bishop of Jazz**") whose inventive and technically brilliant improvisations astonish and inspire all lucky enough to hear him.

If **Folk Music** is your bag, be sure to catch **Lara Herscovitch**, former Connecticut State Troubadour, who performed on *Prairie Home Companion*, NPR and tours from Maine to Miami. Informed by decades of international humanitarian work, she blends modern folk, blues, jazz and pop in songs that entertain and uplift audiences – all with a voice "like expensive liquor" (*Performer Magazine*). Another treat: **Mike Agranoff**, that category-defying folksinger/humorist whose repertoire encompasses traditional ballads, fiddle tunes, Tin Pan Alley and his own witty pen. With a skilled hand on guitar and concertina, he captivates his audiences, delivering unforgettable stories, deliciously sly parodies and heart stopping spoken word pieces.

First Night's **Classical** offerings include the superb artistry of **Harmonium Choral Society**. From a Renaissance processional to the rich romanticism of Bruckner and the mysticism of Erik Esenwalds, Harmonium's richly diverse programming and high artistic level will dazzle you. Under the inspired direction of Dr. Anne Matlack, Harmonium will also highlight gender equity, featuring gorgeous works by multiple outstanding women composers. For those more instrumentally inclined, be sure to celebrate the New Year with the award-winning **Baroque Orchestra of New Jersey** which explores great orchestral works from the 17th through the 21st centuries under the baton of conductor/artistic director Dr. Robert Butts.

(Continued on page 2)



TOP ROW, L-R: The Tones; Dana McCurdy's Community In Rhythm Drum Circle; Jazz pianist Ben Rosenblum; Rio Clemente, "Bishop of Jazz." BOTTOM ROW, L-R: Mike Agranoff, folk singer/humorist; Contemporary Troubadour, Lara Herscovitch; Harmonium Choral Society (courtesy of Morristowngreen.com); Baroque Orchestra of New Jersey.

28th First Night® Morris County (Continued from page 1)

First Night's rich sampling of **World Cultures** includes the virtuosic, all-female multinational ensemble, the **Asaran Earth Trio**, whose unique repertoire ranges from 13th century Sephardic music to Hungarian folk songs, and includes contemporary and original works. Their unique arrangements for voice and percussion, colored by improvisation and contemporary harmonies, honor their varied roots (Brazil, Hungary and Italy). Fascination abounds with **Korean Traditional Dance of Choomnoori**, whose elegant costumes, disciplined dance formations and intricate drumming techniques showcase the rich traditions of Korean drum dancing. And audiences will delight in **Music From China**, an outstanding NYC ensemble which has performed at the Library of Congress, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian, festivals/residencies across USA, with major symphonies, chamber groups and such jazz greats as Ornette Coleman. Hailed by the *NY Times* and *Washington Post* for their artistry, they perform (on traditional instruments) a hauntingly lovely and exciting program of classical and folk arrangements of Chinese music.

In the category of **Dance**, First Night offers not only the chance to watch the fascinating drum dancing of **Korean Traditional Dance of Choomnoori**, but also the opportunity to participate in dancing. If you love reels, line, circle and square dancing to western, jazz and Broadway tunes, or are just curious, neither experience nor partner is needed to participate in **Square Dancing with caller, Mary Moody** – fun (and dancing) for all ages.

Looking for **Theater/Comedy**? Laugh your way into the New Year with the wit and wry humor of comedy stars, **Andy Pitz** and musician/comedian **Rob Paravonian**. A talented regular at NYC's top comedy clubs, Andy appeared on the *Late Show with David Letterman*, *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson*, *Gotham Comedy Live*, as a winner on *Star Search* (CBS) and with national acts in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. Rob blends the mind of a comedian with the soul of a musician, showcasing his unique music-infused humor at top Chicago clubs, on Dr. Demento's *Funny Five*, entertaining troops in Afghanistan, opening for Lily Tomlin and performing throughout 49 states. For young and old alike, **Kit's Interactive Theatre** features Kitty Jones as **Grace, the Pirate** and casts the audience right into the show, as part of her pirate crew! Who knew New Year's Eve included a search for Black Beard's hidden treasure?! Featuring circus magic, **Benjamin Lipman's Comedy**

Cascade combines circus arts, vaudeville and humor with juggling, mime and magic while **Mentalist Eric Walton**, an international award-winning showman, raconteur and mind reader will astonish his audiences as he reads minds, identifies hidden objects, predicts future events and challenges conventional ideas about the limits of human perception. Time travel back a century as the crystalline-voiced **Christine De Leon** brings back the **Roaring Twenties** through the enduring songs and dances of the 1920's. Enjoy more time travel with **The Mark Twain Experience**, highlighting that legendary writer, humorist, author, riverboat pilot, inventor and genuine American genius. With 40 years of research and performances as "Mark Twain," **Alan Kitty** brilliantly captures the wit and wisdom of this iconic figure and makes audiences wonder if the real Twain is still among us.

Children's/Family Programs: During the early session for younger children (4:45-6:45 pm), watch audience members encased in giant bubbles, bubble volcanoes, smoke filled bubbles and other terrific bubble tricks with **OMG Bubbles**. Join in the art making activities with artist Samantha ("Sam") Matthews' **Art 4 Kids** and try your hand building with **Fun with LEGOs®**. For a taste of the exotic, check out the elegant, intricate and exciting drumming and dancing of the **Korean Traditional Dance of Choomnoori**, join the crew of the Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley with **Kit's Interactive Theatre** or try your hand (and feet) at **Square Dancing with Caller, Mary Moody**. Love animals? Who could resist the ever popular **Rizzo's Reptile/Wildlife Discovery** which showcases live reptiles (and other animals) – under the watchful eye of a seasoned animal handler. And feel free to clown around with Juggles, the Clown or enjoy face painting and glitter tattoos with Gina's Facetag at **The Children's Fun Festival**.

Visual Arts: Two visual arts exhibits and fireworks top off that magical evening known as First Night® Morris County. To check out the full lineup of artists, visit: www.firstnightmorris.com.

One inexpensive admission (before 12/21: \$20/ticket; \$17.50 for 4 or more prices go up 12/22-12/31/19) covers all events at First Night®. Every venue is indoors and a free shuttle will take you to nearly all locations. For more information, the latest program updates, to volunteer or to purchase tickets, please visit the First Night® Morris County website at www.firstnightmorris.com or call the First Night® Morris official ticketing partner, the Mayo Performing Arts Center Box Office at (973) 539-8008.



1) The Asaran Earth Trio; 2 & 3) Fan Dance and Drum dancing by Korean Traditional Dance of Choomnoori (drum dance photo by Jeff Sovelove); 4 & 5) Music from China ensemble; 6) Square dance caller, Mary Moody; 7) Comedian Andy Pitz; 8) Comedian/Musician Rob Paravonian; 9) Circus Magician Benjamin Lipman; 10) Christine DeLeon revisits the Roaring Twenties; 11) Mentalist Eric Walton; 12) Kit's Interactive Theatre – Grace, The Pirate; 13) Alan Kitty as Mark Twain; 14) Fun with LEGOs; 15) Gina's Facetag facepainting at the Children's Fun Festival; 16 & 17) Artist "Sam" Matthews and Art 4 Kids; 18) Rizzo's Reptile/Wildlife Discovery; 19) Juggles, the Clown; 20 & 21) OMG Bubbles; 22) Mark de Mos' watercolor, *Comfortable Elegance* at Art Upstairs; 23) Medy Bozkurtian's acrylic on canvas, *Queen of Hearts* at the Starlight Gallery.



Adia Harris

Morristown Housing Authority Commissioner Adia Harris, highlights value of Morris Arts' Storytelling and Girls Surviving programs

In a deeply moving and personal interview, Adia Harris detailed the enormous and enduring impact Morris Arts' Storytelling and Girls Surviving programs have had on her own life. A classmate committed suicide... her father faced major surgery... these were just some issues looming large and frighteningly in her life. But, in late middle school, she found a way to cope with feeling overwhelmed, anxious and powerless by writing about her anger, fears, insecurities, and confusions. With guidance from directors Paula Davidoff and Carolyn Hunt, Adia turned those feelings into something positive. Simply put, she learned to communicate.

Within a supportive, non-judgmental and encouraging atmosphere, Adia and other girls in these programs began trusting one another, sharing their inner struggles, discovering their common bonds and ultimately, forging lifelong relationships as they found ways to create narratives of their experiences.

You don't speak or write perfectly? No problem. You can't come every day? No problem. Do you want to write a play, put together a book, plan a café style entertainment? The choice is yours. This organic, ground-up approach empowered the girls and gave them a positive outlet for their problems. It instilled a sense of ownership, communal purpose, a sense of belonging and sparked their growing confidence as individuals. Yes, they had lives upended by serious family and societal issues complicating the already fraught preteen and teen years. The important difference was that now, through these programs, they had tools, a support group and guidance to help them deal with it all. They were encouraged to improvise, to act out their pain, to find release from tensions through dialogue and acting.

Now a self-assured, confident and poised adult, Adia Harris is not only the proud mom of two boys, ages 2 and 6, but she also owns and runs her own hair salon, serves as a Commissioner of the Morristown Housing Authority on Morristown's Town Council, and gives back to the community by providing haircuts for the homeless and for senior center residents at holiday times.

Adia's career path has included cosmetology school, real estate, corporate work, and direct care of autistic and Down syndrome individuals before establishing her hair salon. She has also coached several drill/step teams, which stress inclusiveness, pride of accomplishment and teamwork. Responding to her high school team, she advocated on their behalf at Morristown High School so that now the drill/step team has official status and support. She remains an assistant drill/step team coach at Frelinghuysen Middle School and will also be working closely with Ellen Papezian, the new director of Girls Surviving, bringing the program to a new generation of students.

"Girls Surviving gave us the tools we needed to become functioning adults. We learned how to communicate our emotions. Without the program I don't know if I would have been able to cope. Programs like this do a lot more than you think and I would not be where I am now if not for this program." Adia added: "These programs provide such valuable, lifelong lessons, enabling students who might otherwise waste their lives to instead develop coping skills and the tools they need to lead more productive and satisfying lives."

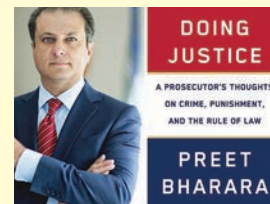
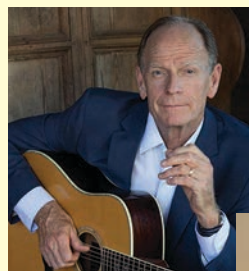
Morris Arts Awards Local Arts Grants for Funding Year 2020

Morris Arts is pleased to announce that 27 Morris County arts organizations received Local Arts Grants totaling \$55,700 for Funding Year 2020. These grants help support visual arts, theatre, dance, instrumental and choral groups, museums, and broad-based community arts programming which, in turn, enable thousands of people throughout our county to experience the arts in a multitude of ways. Funding is made possible through the Local Arts Program of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

This year's awardees include: Arts! By the People (Morristown); Artworks Studio (Randolph); Baroque Orchestra of New Jersey (Dover); Chatham Community Players (Chatham); Coro Lirico (Morristown); County College of Morris Teen Arts Festival (Randolph); Dance Innovations Performance Foundation (Chatham); Fairleigh Dickinson University – WAMFEST (Madison/Teaneck); Festival of Books through Community Foundation of NJ (Morristown); First Night® Morris County (Morristown); Folk Project (Morristown); Good Grief (Morristown); Hanover Wind Symphony (Whippany); Harmonium Choral Society (Morristown); Huaxia Chinese Chorus (Parsippany); Lakeland Youth Symphony (Parsippany); Lyrica Chamber Music (Chatham Township); Masterwork Chorus (Morristown); Morris Choral Society (Morristown); Morris Music Men (Morristown); Morristown Neighborhood House (Morristown); Music at Morristown United Methodist Church (Morristown); New Jersey Jazz Society (Summit); Opera at Florham (Convent Station); Skylands Songwriters Guild (Ledgewood); Visions and Pathways (Bridgewater); and Women's Theater Company (Lake Hiawatha).

Additionally, \$2,000 will be awarded for mini-grants in 2020.

Clockwise from top left: The Folk Project presents Livingston Taylor (James Taylor's brother); Morristown Festival of Books 2019 keynote speaker, Preet Bharara, and his new book, *Doing Justice*; First Night Morris County presented Maria Sumareva, Moldovan piano virtuoso; New Jersey Jazz Society magazine publicizing upcoming jazz festival; The Chatham Community Players' 2018 production of *A Christmas Carol*; Dance Innovations Performance Foundation's *Paint the Town* performance.



Guests had so much fun talking with the accomplished and fascinating host conversationalists at last year's Great Conversations that no one wanted to leave! Be sure to mark **April 29, 2020** on your calendars now and reserve your place as soon as invitations arrive in January. Experience a one-of-a-kind evening with the many distinguished and highly accomplished host conversationalists while helping Morris Arts continue its valuable work in the community!

Ehlers and Coladarci Arts Scholarship applications available in December



Due by **5pm on Friday, January 17, 2020**, applications will be available in early December at the guidance offices of Morris County public, private and parochial high schools and online at the Morris Arts website, <http://goo.gl/GqidY> for www.morrisarts.org (under Programs). The Elaine Ehlers Arts Scholarship (\$5,000) and the Eugenie Coladarci Arts Scholarship (\$1,500) are awarded each year to graduating high school seniors who: must be Morris County residents, have demonstrated artistic excellence in dance, drama, music or visual arts and plan to pursue post-secondary studies at an accredited institution or acknowledged arts school or fine arts program.



Top, L-R: 2019 Scholarship recipients dancer Leah Suskind (Ehlers Scholarship Winner) and soprano Sophia Grace Donelan (Coladarci Scholarship Winner); Above, L-R: Morris Arts' Executive Director, Tom Werder with Leah Suskind, Sophia Grace Donelan and Honorable Mention, bassoonist Matt Witsotky.

Looking for the Perfect Gift?

Celebrate the holidays and milestones with the gift that keeps giving all year long! A donation to Morris Arts is a perfect way to honor that special someone who values the joy that the Arts bring to children and families in our community. Colorful gift cards will be sent to your honoree, with a letter acknowledging your tax deductible contribution forwarded to you. Contact Gina Moran at gmoran@morrisarts.org or at (973) 285-5115, x13.

Thanks to our very generous recent funders whose support makes our work possible: Armington Su Pau Fund; The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; investors Bank; Kiwanis Club of Randolph; Mondelēz Global LLC; Morgan Stanley & Co., Inc.; The Provident Bank Foundation; RB; and William E. Simon Foundation.

SAVE THE DATES:

- **December 31, 2019: First Night Morris County**, 44 events in 16 venues Morristown, 4:45pm-midnight, visit www.firstnightmorris.com for tickets and information.
- **January 17, 2020: deadline for Coladarci and Ehlers Scholarship applications**
- **April 29, 2020: Great Conversations gala**, 5-10pm, Birchwood Manor, Whippany, NJ

Morris Arts

14 Maple Avenue, Suite 301
Morristown, NJ 07960
(973) 285-5115
Editor: Dr. Lynn L. Siebert



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The New Jersey State Council on the Arts has awarded *Morris Arts* a "Citation of Excellence" and designation as a "Major Service Organization" in recognition of the quality of its solid history of "service excellence, substantial activity and broad public service".

This newsletter is available in large print by calling (973) 285-5115, ext. 10.

Large Print

For a calendar listing of arts events in Morris County and for more information on Morris Arts' many programs and services, visit us at www.morrisarts.org,

like us on , and follow us on .

Can't keep a good pumpkin down: Morris Arts' 10th annual Pumpkin Illumination draws big crowds

Heavy rains may have delayed but didn't diminish the enthusiastic crowds at Morris Arts' 10th annual Pumpkin Illumination event rescheduled for Monday, October 28th.

Smiles, costumes and those inimitable masks (created by artist Dan Fenelon) complimented the enormous creativity showcased in the inventive carved pumpkins that lined the Vail Mansion reflecting pool.

As in prior years, the event featured live jazz, art-making for kids and the luminary parade, led by Morristown Mayor Tim Dougherty (with his wife Mary) and the giant Fenelon-created skeleton.

Morris Arts gratefully acknowledges the generosity of sponsors:



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For more information and photos, visit www.morrisarts.org and the MorristownGreen.com writeup at <https://tinyurl.com/y25zwj63>.

Clockwise from top left: Kids picking out masks to wear; view of Vail Mansion with lit pumpkins lining reflecting pool; the start of the Luminary Parade led by Mayor Tim Dougherty and his wife Mary along with the jazz band, the Lintet; lit pumpkins reflecting in the pool; little girl in costume at art table; closeup of skull and 'cannibal' pumpkins.

