

# ArtsMatters

SHOWCASING THE ARTS IN THE MORRIS AREA



2020-2021

## Top talents, inventive options at 29th First Night® Morris County



Harpsichord virtuoso, Andrew Rosenblum

The arts inspire creativity. No surprise, then, that First Night® Morris County, New Jersey's family-friendly, alcohol and substance-free celebration of the arts on New Year's Eve, would creatively reimagine its 29 year tradition in the face of the Covid pandemic and still present outstanding performances in music, theatre/comedy, family programming and world cultures.

For all 29 years, Morris Arts has been First Night Morris' artistic programmer, securing topflight talents who 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. Outstanding performers – both online and live, two virtual fireworks shows, *Yousic Play Montage's* short performances/interviews with 4 jazz greats (Cory Henry, Jesús Molina, Robert "Sput" Searight and 10 time Grammy winner, Arturo Sandoval) and two Friday "film nights" (December 11 and 18) from the First Contact Film Festival (an independent film makers' competition) are also included in this year's reimagined First Night Morris County.

The added silver linings for this year's First Night: neither the weather nor distance from Morristown on New Year's Eve will matter since the full program (including the film festival) will be available online not only on December 31st but also on demand through January 3rd...accessible from the comfort of one's home!

For something unique and different within First Night's **CLASSICAL MUSIC** offerings, savor the extraordinary skill and musicianship of **award-winning harpsichord virtuoso Andrew Rosenblum** (streaming, on demand). Noted for his "...beautiful shaping of phrases, his sense of color and inflection, his incisive rhythmic impulse, and his fabulous technique...", Rosenblum enjoys a multifaceted career as a harpsichordist and pianist. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, The Kennedy Center, and The Phillips Collection, and internationally, in Mexico, Canada, Saint Lucia, Germany, and the Czech Republic. He won Second Prize in the harpsichord categories of the 2018 Leipzig International Bach Competition and the 2017 Prague Spring International Music Competition, where he also won the Czech Music Fund Foundation Prize for his performance of the

newly commissioned work, *Harpsycho*, by Petr Wajsar. He soloed with Leipziger Barockorchester, Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, Collegium 1704, and Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and performed with many top Baroque ensembles. Rosenblum has advanced to the semi-final round of the Cedille Records Emerging Artist Competition, which will take place in May 2021.

An avid performer of new music, Rosenblum gave the world premiere of Diana Rosenblum's *Curiosities* for harpsichord in 2020, performed in the 2018 Julius Eastman Portrait Concert at the Chicago Cultural Center, and was lauded for his "beautifully responsive...warm and inviting" playing (Colin Clarke, *Fanfare Magazine*) on *Living in the Body* – a two-CD set of songs by Lori Laitman (Naxos, 2019). He serves on the Board of Directors of Kaleidoscope MusArt, an organization that explores links between new, rarely-heard, and well-known works while featuring emerging artists and living composers. On the Piano Staff of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, as well as the Piano Faculty and Harpsichord Faculty of the Heifetz International Music Institute, he has been on the Piano Staff of Lyric Opera of Chicago, Northwestern University, Cleveland Institute of Music, and Cleveland Orchestra Chorus.



L-R: Jazz guitar masters Vinny Raniolo and Frank Vignola; jazz bassist/vocalist Nicki Parrott

**JAZZ** aficionados can rejoice in the wizardry of the great **Frank Vignola Hot Jazz Trio with bassist/vocalist Nicki Parrott** (streaming, on demand).

"Frank Vignola is one of the most extraordinary guitarists performing before the public today. His stunning virtuosity has made him the guitarist of choice for many of the world's top musicians ...Vignola's jaw-dropping technique explains why the *New York Times* deemed him 'one of the brightest stars of the guitar.'"

"There is little in this world so awe-inspiring as witnessing total mastery of a musical instrument. Like seeing Yo-Yo Ma play the cello or Plácido Domingo belt out an aria – sometimes a performer's perfection can elevate a piece of music to heights beyond the realm of imagination. By all accounts, Frank Vignola conjures just that sort of magic with his acoustic guitar."

– Matt Cauthron, *Intermission Magazine*

(Continued on page 2)

# 29th First Night® Morris County (Continued from page 1)

"For me, the standout musician in the ensemble was guitarist Frank Vignola, who can play more musically at ridiculous tempos than just about anyone I've heard."

— The Jazz Session, Jason Crane, Tanglewood Jazz Festival

After a near fatal accident, Frank Vignola, is back, better than ever! One of the top guitarists in the world according to the legendary Les Paul, the amazing Vignola has performed with Ringo Starr, Lionel Hampton, Wynton Marsalis, Tommy Emmanuel, Bucky Pizzarelli and other top stars. With his astounding virtuosity, extraordinary versatility, sly humor and incomparable musicianship, he shares the stage with longterm touring partner, dynamic rhythm guitarist Vinny Raniolo, who himself has toured 14 countries on 3 continents, performed in the world's top venues and recorded soundtracks for HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* and Woody Allen's film, *Café Society*.

Joining this illustrious duo for a slice of jazz heaven is Aussie bassist/vocalist Nicki Parrott, who performed with Les Paul, Paul McCartney and Tommy Emmanuel, among others. Magic happens when Parrott's irresistible voice pairs with the wizardry of Vignola and Raniolo, bringing their mega-talent trio to First Night 2021. It doesn't get better than this!



The British Invasion Years band – Top L-R: Dave Hall, Jon Wolf, Bobby M and Lee Scott Howard. Phonebooth top to bottom: Bobby M, Lee Scott Howard, Jon Wolf and Dave Hall.

The band formed in 1997 as the Robert Murdock Band, blending classic 60s British and American rock, and committed to researching and performing the most faithful and joyful "covers" of that iconic repertoire. They developed the concept of an exciting, unique concert experience, meticulously recreating all the amazing 60's hit songs, complete with period accurate outfits and multimedia.

Over the years they have appeared multiple times at First Night Morris County, packing the Mayo Performing Arts Center with standing-room-only crowds and garnering standing ovations! Their programs include chart toppers by iconic British Invasion bands (The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Herman's Hermits, The Zombies, The Dave Clark Five, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Manfred Mann and others). The American Response followed with the band recreating mega hits by legendary artists like The Monkees, Simon & Garfunkel, The Turtles, Paul Revere & The Raiders, The Beach Boys, The Mamas and The Papas, to name just a few. In 2011, they realized that dream of every British Invasion tribute band: opening for one of the original Beatles, Ringo Starr and his All-Starr Band! They have since shared the stage with other legendary artists such as The Beach Boys, Herman's Hermits, Leon Russell, connected with a major talent agency, toured and recorded widely. Rock in the New Year with this amazing band!

Intrigued by **WORLD CULTURES**? Irish and all other eyes will be smiling with **Champion Irish Fiddler Brian Conway and guitarist/singer John Walsh** (streaming, on demand). In true Irish fiddling tradition – hallmarks of Irish county fairs and outdoor celebrations – fiddler Brian Conway and guitarist/vocalist John Walsh took advantage of a spring-like November day to record their First Night



From top: Champion Irish Fiddler, Brian Conway; Irish guitarist/singer John Walsh.

performance in a lovely landscape, evoking the green fields of Ireland (while modeling Covid 19 precautions at the same time). Widely considered one of the best Irish fiddlers of any style, Conway is a leading exponent of the tastefully ornamented *Sligo* fiddling style made famous by the late Michael Coleman. Winner of multiple All-Ireland fiddling titles, Conway was influenced by the legendary fiddler and composer Martin Wynne and the great Andy McGann of New York, a direct student of Michael Coleman, who further shaped Conway's precision and skill on the instrument. The distinctness of Conway's tone, the lift of his playing, and the deft ornamentation that he brings to his performances have placed him among the finest Irish fiddlers of any style. He has performed throughout North America, Ireland and Europe, mentored other champion Irish fiddlers and recorded 6 CDs (including for the Smithsonian) to critical acclaim. Irish-American guitarist, singer and producer John Walsh joins Conway in the special performance for First Night Morris County.

Looking for a little **MAGIC** on New Year's Eve? Be sure to check out **Jason Hudy's Mesmerizing Magic** (streaming, on demand). Described as "One of the hottest wand swingers out there!" by actor Neil Patrick Harris, Magician Jason Hudy delivers mystery, intrigue, and comedy in every cutting edge show, as he draws you into the intricate world of illusion. With over 8,000 performances in 14 countries around the world, Jason has brought his magic and illusions to over a million people across the globe! Featured in theaters, performing arts centers, cruise ships and casinos, he is a regular guest entertainer on Disney Cruise Lines, and was one of a select group of magicians invited to perform at the "House of Magic" at Studio City Casino in Macau, near Hong Kong. Jason toured 30 cities across China and headlined 950 performances of "The Magic of Saipan," a dinner theater show on the island of Saipan (a U.S. Territory in the South Pacific). Additionally, Jason has performed for ESPN, Hersey, Mitsubishi, and appeared on national TV with CBS' *The Late Late Show*. In November 2019, his TedX Talk provided an insightful and entertaining peek "behind the curtain" into the world of magic and illusion. Who doesn't need a little extra magic as 2021 begins?



Magician Jason Hudy



Comedian Joe Larson

Desperately seeking some **COMEDY**? Comedian **Joe Larson** (in live performance, with additional videos streaming, on demand) will tickle your funny bone and have you smiling all night. Pandemic permitting, Joe will be performing live in two limited-attendance performances at the Mayo Performing Arts Center. This Seattle-born and raised comedian decided he didn't have enough traffic, smog, and pastrami in his life so he moved to New York City. Working the comedy circuit on the east coast, Joe was nominated "Best Up-And-Coming Comedian" at the NYC MAC Awards, and was a finalist in both the prestigious *Johnny Carson Great American Comedy Festival* and the *Boston Comedy Festival*. His popular blog, "Man with A Baby," is read and enjoyed by many, and online sketch comedy pieces with "Grandma's Favorite" are a YouTube favorite. If you haven't see him killin' it on stage, you might have heard Joe on the nationally syndicated *The Bob & Tom Show...* or seen him in television appearances on *The Tonight Show's Laugh Squad*, *Laughs* on FOX, *Gotham Comedy Live* and on *The Speed Channel*. He's even had the time to fit in an appearance on the film, *Stand-Up 360*. From a colleges to comedy clubs, Joe has been funny everywhere. Don't miss the chance to see this great act in action! (In the event MPAC is closed due to new virus regulations, "best of" videos of Larson's comedy will be made available streaming and on demand to ticket holders).

Visit [www.firstnightmorris.com](http://www.firstnightmorris.com) for more information about the program/artists/schedule of events and to purchase tickets. Tickets are also available through the Mayo Performing Arts Center (MPAC) by phone at (973) 539-8008 or at the MPAC Box Office at 100 South Street, Morristown, NJ.

Pricing is discounted through December 21st for each of three options:

**First Pass** (streaming, on demand through Jan. 3) \$10 through Dec. 21; \$15 afterwards

**Souvenir Package:** (streaming, on demand through Jan. 3, button and program) \$20 through Dec. 21; \$25 afterwards

**FNMC2021** (streaming, on demand through Jan. 3, button, program and 1 live show) \$30 through Dec. 21; \$35 afterwards



# Can't keep a good pumpkin down: Morris Arts' 11th annual Pumpkin Illumination

For the past 10 years, Morris Arts has celebrated Pumpkin Illumination, bringing families together to share their creatively carved pumpkins, enjoy family arts activities, live jazz, a luminary mask parade and the delights of seeing brightly glowing pumpkins reflected in the pool at the Vial Mansion.

This year, Morris Arts worked to preserve the spirit of the event despite Covid 19 restrictions, engaging Artist Dan Fenelon of Core Creative Placemaking to host three free Halloween-themed virtual workshops for children and their families: Miniature Scarecrow Creations (October 19), Mask Decorating (October 20) and Pumpkin Carving/Decorating (October 22). Participants shared photos of their work for a community video we are creating to celebrate the event and Halloween. In all, 42 families participated in the series, many of whom returned for each of the three workshops. Dan Fenelon's hour-long instructional workshops were great for both kids and adults.

*"Thank you again for a wonderful workshop with Dan Fenelon! It was a really fun activity to do at home and to carve together. My daughter and father loved it and. My Dad enjoyed the popsicle teeth the most and I'm sure he will copy the idea for Halloween. Attached is a picture of them and their finished pumpkins. Their names are Lilah (7) and Lawrence (70) of East Hanover, NJ. Thank you again to Morris Arts for going the extra distance to make this Halloween as good as it can be in this crazy year!"*

– The Shuman Family

Morris Arts thanks our generous sponsors for their support:



1) Pumpkin carving and decorating; 2) mask decorating; 3) Artist Dan Fenelon demonstrating pumpkin carving at his studio; 4) Miniature Scarecrow.

Creative results from the workshops: 5) Carved pumpkins 6 & 7) two Halloween masks; 8) Lilah and Lawrence Shuman with their carved pumpkins.

## Delightful Digital Discourse with *Great Conversations From Home*

Instead of our usual spring event, this year's Great Conversations adjusted to the pandemic, rescheduled (on October 8th) and converted to an entirely digital experience. Our guests conversed with their chosen hosts in separate "zoom rooms" and were able to experience the same lively and stimulating conversations but from the comfort and safety of their own homes. Thanks to the commitment of our host conversationalists, *Great Conversations from Home* offered the same full roster of outstanding leaders from the arts, media, tech, science, healthcare, public service, sports, and industry – from which guests could choose. Of course, no meals or cocktails were served but the main attraction – great conversations with inspiring individuals – remained the central focus of the event. Hosts shared their insights, life experiences and related stories about their career paths as they interacted with the guests at their virtual "tables." Guests learned about so many fascinating topics: science/art interconnections, running with the bulls in Spain and climbing sand dunes in Morocco, the toll of constant world tours with a successful orchestra or addressing challenges of building diversity in concert programming, what it feels like to actually "beat Bobby Flay," to meet seven presidents or to attend 22 Super Bowls. No zoom fatigue here. The evening flew by all too quickly and everyone wanted more! Kudos to the Great Conversation organizers for tackling the significant technical challenges and for enabling this most special event to run as remarkably well as it did.



Morris Arts gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our sponsors: **Encore:** Allergan; Bayer; Crum & Forster; CVS Health; Hackensack Meridian Health; MCM Wealth Management at Morgan Stanley; NJTV; ROI-NJ **Green Room:** Delta Dental of New Jersey **Ovation:** Finn Partners; Mondelēz International; Quest Diagnostics **Applause:** BASF; Delta Dental of New Jersey; investors Bank; JWeber Creative; MetLife; Morristown Medical Center; New York Jets; NK Architects; Vision Real Estate Partners; **Star:** Gensler; Morris County Chamber of Commerce; Riker Danzig; Sherman Wells Sylvester & Stamelman; Shop Rite of Greater Morristown; **Supporting Role:** Kennedys.

## Ehlers and Coladarci Arts Scholarship applications available in December

Due by **5pm on Friday, January 22, 2021**, this year's applications will be available online in early December through the guidance offices of Morris County public, private and parochial high schools and online at the Morris Arts website, <http://goo.gl/GqidYf> or [www.morrisarts.org](http://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 a) must be Morris County residents b) have demonstrated artistic excellence in dance, drama, music or visual arts and c) plan to pursue post-secondary studies at an accredited institution or acknowledged arts school or fine arts program.

For more information, please contact Dr. Lynn L. Siebert, Director of Arts Participation & Communications at [lsiebert@morrisarts.org](mailto:lsiebert@morrisarts.org)



L-R: 2020 Scholarship recipients: Violinist Ryan Nguyen (Ehlers Scholarship Winner) and visual artist Emma Schaberg (Coladarci Scholarship Winner).

## Thanks . . .

to our very generous recent funders whose support makes our work possible: Armington Su Pau Fund; The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; investors Bank; Loews Corporation; Masterwork Foundation; Mondelēz Global LLC; Morgan Stanley & Co., Inc.; Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation; George Ohl Trust; The Provident Bank Foundation; and William E. Simon Foundation.

## 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](mailto:gmoran@morrisarts.org) or at (973) 285-5115, x13.

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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](http://www.morrisarts.org),**

**like us on** , **and follow us on** .

## Ongoing:

Our **VANISHING WORLDS** exhibit remains in place through mid-April, at the Gallery at 14 Maple *and online in virtual form* at [rb.gy/xtikpl](http://rb.gy/xtikpl) where viewers can see and purchase the artworks.

Sharing our **MUSIC BEYOND BORDERS** archive of world music and dance also continues – as a weekly feature on our homepage. Revisit the world with us!

## SAVE THE DATES:

- **December 11 and 18, 2020: First Night Morris County Friday Night Film Nights**, 7pm – visit [www.firstnightmorris.com](http://www.firstnightmorris.com) for tickets and information
- **December 31, 2020: First Night Morris County**, 5:40pm-midnight, and on demand through January 3rd. Visit [www.firstnightmorris.com](http://www.firstnightmorris.com) for tickets and information
- **January 22, 2021: deadline for Coladarci and Ehlers Arts Scholarship applications**
- **April 29, 2021: Great Conversations at Home**, details to follow

## ARTS IN EDUCATION ZOOM SHOWCASE SERIES

OCTOBER, 27<sup>th</sup> 2:30 - 4:00  
NOVEMBER, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2:30 - 4:00  
NOVEMBER, 10<sup>th</sup> 2:30 - 4:00



## Virtual Showcase Series

On October 27, Morris Arts launched its Virtual Arts in Education Showcase Series – intended for school administrators, teachers, Cultural Arts Committees and PTO/HSAs leaders. Each week, the Showcase Series spotlighted five artists "Live" on Zoom as they presented a preview of their virtual assembly, workshop or residency programs. Featured artists included: Sustainability and Music with Bash the Trash, Music Technology with Brent Daniels, The Tanglewood Marionettes, Bilingual programs with 123 Andres, World music with Kinobe, Living Voices, History's Alive, Storytelling with Queen Nur, Number Drummer and Zentangle with Mimi Topping, among others. For more information please contact Barbara Reuther, Director of Arts in Education at [breuther@morrisarts.org](mailto:breuther@morrisarts.org).

School membership is not required but schools' annual support means more than ever. Member schools also receive discounts on some bookings and alerts about free programs.