

CIGAR BOX BULLETIN

Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc.
37 Lafayette Place, Greenwich, CT 06830



www.greenwichrma.org

Chair/Editor: **Tim Brooks**

Scribes: **Av Rivel, Arnold Gordon, Ed Farrell,
Joe Mancinelli, Frank Scarpa, Joe Angland, Bob Shullman,
Fred Wu**

Archivist: **Tad Larrabee** Website: **Mark Geimer** Format: **Len Carusi, Mark Geimer**

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SCRIBE: FRED WU

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." - Mahatma Gandhi

President **MICHAEL AMBROSINO** started the meeting at 9:45, and **JOHN STANKUNAS** led the Pledge of Allegiance. **LEN CARUSI** shared a video of the "Star-Spangled Banner" sung by the Melody Men at Citifield.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MICHAEL reminded all that membership meetings during the month of January will be held over Zoom. Indoor tennis will continue; **ANDY HOLMES** asks members to wear masks when not on the court. All in-person card games are canceled at The Woman's Club. The Nominating Committee will be meeting over the next couple of months to prepare a slate of officers and committee chairmen; please consider accepting a position if asked by the committee. **FRED WU** is the scribe today. **SAM MARASSO** is the mentor today. **ARNOLD GORDON** will take over the meeting toward the end, when **MICHAEL** needs to leave for an appointment.

Corresponding Secretary **ARNOLD GORDON** led a pre-meeting discussion about the covid situation. **ARNOLD** asked if members were able to obtain the free covid test kits and masks and commented on the horrendous traffic bottlenecks at both the Senior Center and Grass Island. Surely, they could have planned it better and even used other locations. With more curiosity, he asked if any members have had a fourth covid mRNA vaccine shot, something

that might be in the cards soon. The differences between flu and covid were discussed, as recently the symptoms have become more similar. Covid has a much higher fatality rate and also the risk of long-term illness (“long covid”). He then offered a remedy to relieve the stress caused by the pandemic – bang your head on a firm surface until anti-stressed or unconscious. As a bonus he is giving away gift certificates for one visit with Dr. Jack Kevorkian. In other news, he reported that the Energizer Bunny was arrested and charged with battery.

ARNOLD then reminded us that this Saturday, January 8th, there will be a memorial service at 11 am for **CHET** and Ginny **RISIO** at Christ Church. A lunch will be served afterwards. Mask wearing is mandatory.

ARNOLD introduced **JIM DEAN** who gave a remembrance of former member **HOWARD “DAVE” NOBLE**, who died just over two weeks ago. **DAVE** was a well-known commercial and residential real estate broker. He was a Lion’s Club member and active in the Boy Scouts at Camp Seton. He and his wife were active in the sport of curling. He was married and had three children. He was born in Garden City, NY. A quiet guy who was always there to lend a helping hand, he worked in the community in a low-key manner, but was very effective, a real good man. We observed 15 seconds of silence.

Next, **ARNOLD** introduced **JERRY SCHWENDEMAN**, jokester for the week.

PETER STERN gave the membership report.

1. Attendance: Zoom, 54, total, 54. No guests.
2. Birthdays:

STEVE	BOIES	81
ERIC	ZITZMANN	86
JOHN	CRAINE	85
KEATING	HAGMANN	76
MIKE	HAYDEN	90
JAN	MEYER	86
BILL	FAKUNDINY	90

It would be helpful if everyone would log on to Zoom with a name rather than a phone number or alias displayed under their picture, so that **PETER** can record attendance.

President **AMBROSINO** said that we had about \$78,000 at the end of December, 2021. Each of our in-person meetings costs \$500 for hall rental, so we are in good shape financially.

HORST TEBBE previewed today's speaker, Méli^se Brunet. She is a French conductor who was scheduled to conduct two concerts this weekend, but they had to be postponed. Nevertheless, she will give her talk today on Zoom. **ARNOLD** announced next week's speaker, David Yermack, Professor of Finance and Business Transformation at NYU Stern School of Business, who will give a talk entitled "Overview of Cryptocurrencies: The Basics."

FUN AND GAMES

Tai- Chi: **WILL MORRISON** described the "Deep Release" program of exercise at First Congregational Church, Old Greenwich. Vaccinations and masks are required, and Zoom attendance is also available.

Hearts: **JOHN STANKUNAS** reported that on December 29, there were two tables and eight players, who completed six games with the following winners: **STANKUNAS** (3), **MORONEY** (2), and **AMBROSINO** (1). Moonshots: **STANKUNAS** (2), **AMBROSINO** (2), and **SWEGER** (1).

Tennis: **ANDY HOLMES** said that there are no results to report for indoor tennis as there has been no play for the past two weeks due to Christmas and New Year's. The Spring season will commence this coming Friday. When the season resumes, players are being asked to please wear masks at all times when not out on the court playing. If a player feels more comfortable playing tennis with a mask, then by all means please do so.



The Tennis Brigade, December, 2021

Bridge: JOHN FEBLES reported on bridge results:

December 22:

1. **TONY COCCHI**, 4160
2. **ED MASTOLONI**, 2890
3. **ANDRE MAZUREK**, 2270

December 29th:

1. **RON MURRAY**, 2760
2. **ED MASTOLONI**, 2730
3. **JOHN FEBLES**, 1283

Today's bridge will take place on Trickster.

Pickleball: PAT MacCARTHY reported that on Monday it was 28 degrees, but we had two full courts. He reminded members that pickleball is played from 11 am until 1 pm on Mondays and Thursdays at Christiano Field. If you would like to be put on the email list confirming the schedule, please contact **MARK GEIMER** (mark.geimer@gmail.com).

Before delivering the Walkers report, **TAD LARRABEE** talked about his experience with solar panels. "We have an all-electric house and have been producing most of our electricity from solar panels since January 2019. We are very happy with the results! Beyond the

environmental benefits, one element that is usually overlooked is the return on investment. When we started, investment returns on bonds were very low and remain so today. In spite of that, many of us have a portion of our retirement investments in bonds to lower our risk. In our case, one investment alternative was solar panels where our investment return is roughly nine percent. As a kicker, if electricity costs increase (which has happened), our effective rate of return increases without a concurrent reduction in the “face value” of the bond-equivalent, something that ordinary bonds can’t provide. Furthermore, real estate agents have indicated that the resale value of our home increased by more than twice the net cost of our investment in solar energy, and it does not increase our tax assessment. Overall, it has been one of our better investment decisions outside the recent stock market. If you are curious and want to know more about my experience with solar, please give me a call at 203-637-4023 or email me at tadlarra@optonline.net.

Walkers: TAD reported that on Thursday morning, December 23rd, the RMA Walkers met at the Greenwich YWCA parking lot and walked through various neighborhoods down to Long Island Sound at the bottom of Steamboat Road and returned via Greenwich Avenue. Then on Thursday morning, December 30th, we met at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Riverside, and again walked down to Long Island Sound through some interesting neighborhoods including Harbor Point where we "trespassed" out-of-season to Elias Point where we had a great view of Greenwich Point and the Sound. We also found some of the remains of the old mansion and grounds that is the current site of the Harbor Point neighborhood.

Both times we had somewhat questionable weather predictions, but the weather gods looked favorably on us and we had two very nice walks. Each time we had close to a dozen walkers and many good, though sometimes "odd," conversations. You had to be there!

Platform Tennis: JIM DEAN reported that there were nine players at paddle tennis yesterday.

Volunteer Hours: JIM BUTLER noted that volunteer groups are shrinking, and it is getting difficult to continue. He suggested each week at this meeting a group leader present what they do, and try to attract additional volunteers.

SPEAKER PROGRAM

HORST TEBBE introduced Dr. Mélisse Brunet, who is currently a finalist for the position of Music Director of the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra. A French conductor, Ms. Brunet is the Music Director of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, an orchestra made up of freelance musicians from the NYC and Philadelphia areas. A protégée of Pierre Boulez, she is one of the twelve conductors selected for the first Conducting Competition La Maestra. Ms. Brunet was one of the six conductors selected for the 2018 Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview, chosen for their “experience, talent, leadership potential, and commitment to a career in service to American orchestras.” In 2017, she was one of six conductors chosen for the international Hart Institute for Women Conductors at the Dallas Opera, selected from 161 applicants from 33 countries. A native of Paris, Ms. Brunet began her studies on the cello, and also learned to play the trumpet, French horn, and piano. She holds diplomas from the Paris Conservatory and the Université la Sorbonne, as well as a Professional Studies diploma from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a doctorate in conducting from the University of Michigan.

HORST conducted the interview of Mélisse using questions of his own, supplemented by those originally posed by **GEORGE UBOGY** and **STEVE BOIES**, as well as some coming from the Zoom audience via the chat window.

Mélisse said that her interest in classical music began when she was a young child, because in France just about every town has a school of music available at low cost. She originally wanted to learn to play drums, but in light of her parents’ opposition, she chose the cello. At some point after playing the cello in school orchestras, she realized that she was bored playing a piece by the great Mozart. But she also realized that the responsibility for her boredom was not with Mozart, but with how the orchestra was being conducted. This was the start of her interest in conducting.

Several questions were asked about her background growing up in Paris, studying at the best music conservatories in France, as well as the French style of music education. She revealed that the Paris Conservatory is not only extremely competitive, but competitive in a negative way, implying that it caused personal enmities and emotional stress. In one fascinating anecdote, she described the final examination in a counterpoint class, which required the student to be sequestered alone in a room for 17 hours with a piano (locked until the start of the test!) to compose a piece of contrapuntal music.

Asked about coming to the United States, Mélisse said that she was very fortunate to have been invited to attend an academic program at the Cleveland Institute of Music. At that point she had studied music in France for many years, and was ready for a change. All she knew of the US was the stereotypes depicted in the French media. When she arrived in Cleveland in 2010, she was shocked by the deep snow, but also by the warmth of the people she met there. She says that was quickly accepted by those she met, and has not felt any desire to return to France, aside from professional engagements there. Mélisse also said that at the time, French orchestras tended to prefer non-French music directors, and that conducting was very much a male-dominated discipline.

HORST asked Mélisse how she would choose programs for the Greenwich Symphony, and how she would get more young people interested in classical concerts. Mélisse explained that this is a complex undertaking, and requires her to get to know the audience. She can learn about her audience from the musicians, but also by gauging the audience reaction to her selections. Her goal is both to please and challenge the audience, exposing them to something unfamiliar that they will appreciate. As for attracting youth, she believes that education programs are vital because when young children are exposed to classical music, at some point in their lives their appreciation will grow. Even if this takes many years, at least the youth of today are more likely to become concert-going seniors of tomorrow, if they have had the early music education.

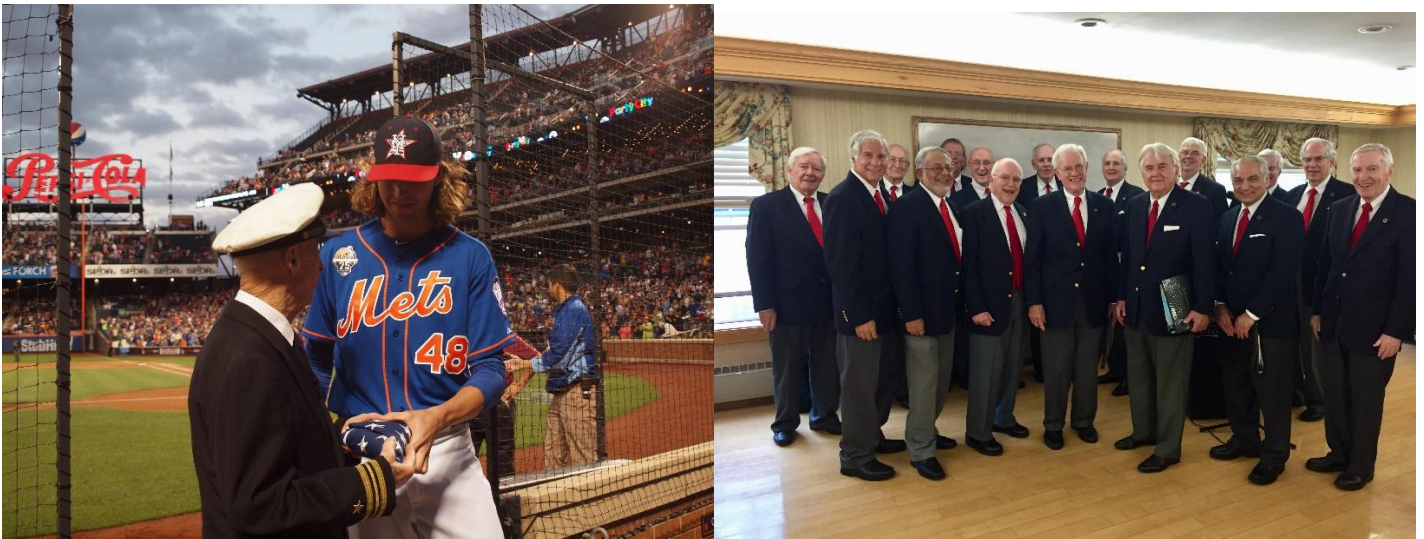
When asked about conducting technique and preparation, Mélisse described several ways in which she studies a new piece. She mentioned analysis of harmony, form, orchestration, and supplementary research into the cultural life and times of the composer. Learning about the important artistic trends of the day gives her insights into the intent of the composer. As for technique, Mélisse said that she does not always use a baton when she conducts. She pointed out that a baton is good because it is very visible to the musicians, especially in a large orchestra where some of the musicians are distant. A baton also helps by magnifying small movements of her hand. However, when not using a baton she can be more expressive with her fingers and gestures. She showed videos of performances of Ravel's *Bolero*, in which she was not using a baton, and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring), when she did use a baton.

Finally, Mélisse pointed out that although she will not be conducting the GSO this coming weekend, her concert week will be rescheduled for later this season. She looks forward to

meeting many RMA members in person, as she likes to mingle with the audience after each performance.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Past President **PETE UHRY** has asked that we include a few “historical” RMA pictures, with a question of the week. At left, from last issue, who is presenting the flag to **CHUCK STANDARD** (in Navy uniform) after the Melody Men performed at a 2014 Mets game? One guess was Noah Syndergaard. But the correct answer is another “long hair,” Jacob deGrom, no. 48. At right is the full Melody Men chorus in all its glory—but in what year?



More blasts from the past next issue. Do you have any pictures of past RMA activities?

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

TO CBB CONTRIBUTORS: Scribe for the next meeting, on January 12, will be →**BOB SHULLMAN**←. Please send a copy of any remarks you want included in the CBB promptly to **BOB** at bob.shullman@gmail.com.

ALL MEMBERS: Do not forget to report all your inside and outside volunteer hours to **JOHN FEBLES** at jfebles13@gmail.com.

ALL MEMBERS: The CBB Team works every week to write and publish an informative and concise bulletin for our members' enjoyment. We welcome new members to join the CBB Team. Please contact **TIM BROOKS** at tbroo@aol.com if you are interested.

ALL MEMBERS are reminded that in addition to streaming on the Internet, RMA speakers are normally shown on the local public access TV channels, Verizon FIOS channel 24 and Optimum (Cablevision) channel 79.

Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc. · 37 Lafayette Place · Greenwich, CT 06830 · USA.
Visit our website at <https://greenwichtma.org>.

RMA 2022 CALENDAR

Weekly Repetitive Activities*			
Day	Time	Activity	Contact
Mondays	9:30 am	Tai Chi Workout	Will Morrison - wdmorrison@gmail.com
Mondays	11:00 am to 1:00 pm	Pickleball at Christiano Park	Pat MacCarthy – pmacCarthy415@gmail.com Mark Geimer – mark.geimer@gmail.com
Tuesdays	10:00 to 11:00 am	Platform (paddle) tennis at Loughlin Field, Cos Cob	John Dean - jhdeanco@gmail.com
Wednesdays	9:45 to 10:30 am	RMA Weekly Meeting	Horst Tebbe - onehorst@optimum.net or Len Carusi at lencarusi@gmail.com
Wednesdays	12:45 to 3:30 pm	Hearts at the Women's Club	John Kavanagh - jjkct176@gmail.com
Wednesdays	12:30 pm	Bridge at The Women's Club	Andre Mazurek - mazurek.a.j@gmail.com
Thursdays	8:00 am	"Tai Chi Fundamentals" – First Congregational Church, Old Greenwich	Will Morrison - wdmorrison@gmail.com
Thursdays	9:00 am	RMA Walking	Tad Larrabee - tadlarra@optonline.net
Thursdays	11:00 am to 1:00 pm	Pickleball at Christiano Park	Pat MacCarthy – pmacCarthy415@gmail.com Mark Geimer – mark.geimer@gmail.com

Friday	1:30-3:00 pm	Tennis	Andy Holmes - andyholmes56@gmail.com)
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*Day & time of some events may vary; check with contact