

CIGAR BOX BULLETIN

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



www.greenwichrma.org

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SCRIBE: BOB SHULLMAN

"War is what happens when language fails." - Margaret Atwood

President **MICHAEL AMBROSINO** opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Song leader **JERRY SCHWENDEMAN**, accompanied by pianist **JIM SANTORA**, then led the RMA in singing "America the Beautiful," "Oh What a Beautiful Morning," and "For Me and My Gal." Mentor for the day was **JOE DOWLING** and Scribe, **BOB SHULLMAN**. **MICHAEL** then made the following announcements:

- In-person meetings will continue at the First Presbyterian Church unless members are notified otherwise.
- An Irishman is needed to give a human-interest story for the March 16 meeting focusing on St. Patrick's Day.
- **MICHAEL** is planning on organizing some members to march in this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade.
- The Greenwich Eastern Civic Center is now allowing the RMA hearts and bridge to play there at least through March of this year. Will keep members posted when/if that arrangement changes.
- Dues for the next fiscal year (May 2022 through April 2023) will remain at \$100.

Corresponding Secretary **ARNOLD GORDON** then discussed that many of us are interested in getting a second Covid-19 booster vaccine shot, given the news that immunity does wane within four months after the first one, even though severe side effects, hospitalization and

death are still largely prevented, A fourth mRNA vaccine dose is approved in the U.S. for the immuno-compromised, but for the rest of us the vaccine schedule is considered sub-optimal by many infectious disease experts. If the FDA and CDC decide to make a second booster available to the general population, it will not be available until the fall. In Sweden, it is now available for all those over 80 years old. For more details, see:
<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/some-americans-can-already-get-a-4th-covid-19-shot-but-when-will-all-be-eligible/ar-AAU4aen?ocid=winp-se>

If you are not familiar with the Greenwich Historical Society and its home base at the Bush Holley House, you are missing lots of good exhibits and programs. Their new event schedule has some very interesting programs, including some well-known musical group performances. The Bob Button Band is among them. See the following for details:
<https://greenwichhistory.org/ghs-events>

Some of you may be familiar with the humor of Steven Wright, who is known for his distinctly lethargic voice and slow, deadpan delivery of ironic, philosophical and sometimes nonsensical jokes. Put your thinking caps on for a few examples of his unusual wit:

- Support bacteria, they are the only culture some people have.
- Boycott shampoo; demand the REAL poo.
- I spilled spot remover on my dog. He's gone now.
- I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize.
- 99 percent of lawyers give the rest a bad name.
- I had my coat hangers spayed.

ARNOLD then introduced RMA veteran jokester **TOM HEALY**, who delighted the meeting attendees by delivering six wonderful jokes. Additionally, **TOM** mentioned that the Melody Men are starting up soon and they need a backup piano player. If you know of anyone who may be up for assisting, please let **TOM** know.

Next up was **JOHN FEBLES** who reviewed volunteer hours.

Membership chair **PETER STERN** then followed with three birthday announcements:

- **PETER SCHIEFERDECKER**, 97
- **RANDY MOTLAND**, 87
- **WAYNE DE VRIES**, 79

Attendance was reported as 67 in-person plus 10 on Zoom, for a total of 77 members. In addition, David de Milhau, guest of **BOB RIMMER** and **PETE UHRY**, was welcomed. Plus, it was nice to see **ED BLOOM** at the meeting. **PETER** then reminded everyone that all attendees must be vaccinated as well as have had a booster shot, plus they should always have with them proof of their vaccination status.

JACK WEIR then came to the microphone and briefly discussed the recent activities of the Public Relations Committee, whose primary role is to publicize the RMA and assist in attracting new members. Among its recent activities has been working with *The Greenwich Sentinel* which is now publishing a recap of our presentations as a major feature in their weekly newspaper.

Next up was **HORST TEBBE** who discussed the need for some additional members to volunteer to:

- Video the weekly meetings
- Zoom the weekly presentations
- Manage the sound system

JERRY POLLACK then came to the microphone and discussed the background of Joshua Gersen, today's speaker, with whom he will be conducting an informative question and answer interview regarding Joshua's thinking about his approach to conducting and the music he loves as well as potentially becoming the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra's musical director and conductor. Joshua Gersen is the fourth of the five candidates competing for that position.

An artist of impeccable musical credentials, Maestro Gersen is widely respected as an engaging and inspiring conductor, able to communicate effortlessly with both young and established orchestras internationally. A native of the New York area, he has been music director of the New York Youth Symphony for the past five years and recently concluded his tenure as the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

A respected composer as well as conductor, Joshua is a champion of contemporary music and was principal conductor of the Ojai Music Festival in 2013, where he led numerous performances by celebrated American composers such as Lou Harrison and John Luther Adams. He also remains passionate about the core classical repertoire, in particular the German and Russian masters, as well as the classic American composers, including Copland, Gershwin, Barber and Bernstein.

Joshua has enjoyed a very successful relationship with the New World Symphony and since his conducting debut with the San Francisco Symphony has been invited back numerous times to conduct a variety of concerts.

Joshua grew up in Monroe, CT, attended some Greenwich Symphony concerts in his youth, and had many teachers in the orchestra. He earned his undergraduate degree in composition from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and received his degree in conducting from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

On February 26 and 27 Maestro Gersen will conduct the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra in a program of Eleanor Alberga's *The Golden Palace from Sun Warrior*, Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 2*, and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*.

Next up was **PETER UHRY** who discussed next week's presenter, Leslee Asch, who will be giving a very informative presentation about puppetry entitled "Puppetry as an Art Form-The Legacy of Jim Henson". When you hear the word *puppet*, what is the first name that comes to mind? It is likely Jim Henson. Many books and thousands of pages have been written about the beloved American icon's life and work, but *Out of the Shadows*, written by Leslee, is the first to focus solely on his love of, and impact on, puppetry as a vital contemporary art form. This is an important and previously unexplored aspect of the Henson legacy.

Leslee will highlight some of the important connections Connecticut and Greenwich have to this ancient and yet continually evolving art form. Since 1965 the University of Connecticut has been conferring undergraduate and graduate degrees in puppetry, through its Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry. And, since 1990, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, CT, has had puppetry as one of its six core conferences.

Leslee worked for Jim Henson for over twenty years. She began her career as a puppet builder. Her first project was casting latex shoes for the marionette versions used in the now classic *Emmet Otter's Jugband Christmas*. She also had a hand in building a little red monster who, in the hands of a gifted performer, grew up to become the beloved Elmo; and she built the original Boober for *Fraggle Rock*, a show designed to help promote world peace. She went on to serve as director of exhibitions for Jim Henson Productions, curating and managing exhibitions world-wide. She also served as executive director of the Jim Henson Foundation and producing director of the Henson International Festivals of Puppet Theater. She was a

long-time trustee of the Jim Henson Foundation, and now serves on the board of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center.

The Jim Henson Foundation's International Puppet Festivals, which she produced with Jim Henson's daughter Cheryl, brought puppet theater into mainstream American theater. Between 1992 and 2000, the festivals presented 136 different productions from 31 countries that were seen in 24 theaters throughout New York City. Over 120,000 people attended the New York performances.

Leslee and her husband **WILL MORRISON** have lived in Old Greenwich for nearly 30 years. She has authored *Out of the Shadows: The Henson Festivals and Their Impact on Contemporary Puppet Theater*.

FUN AND GAMES

1. Walkers: **TAD LARRABEE** reported that on Thursday, February 17th, eight walkers met at the Eastern Civic Center and walked around the Edgewater area in southwest Old Greenwich. It was a new area for the walkers with some great views over Long Island Sound. The weather had strong hints of spring, reaching into the mid-50's.

TAD then gave a reminder for music lovers: The Greenwich Choral Society will be giving a concert on Saturday, February 26th, at 4 pm celebrating Beethoven's 250th birthday. The music is varied and enjoyable and the chorus is accompanied by a professional orchestra and soloists. It will be at the First Presbyterian Church in New Canaan. Tickets can be purchased on-line at <https://www.gcs-ct.org> or Google Greenwich Choral Society for their website.

2. Tennis: **PAT MCCARTHY** reported this week's opening round winners were **RON FRIEDMAN /JOHN KNIGHT** as well as **STEVE STEIN/RALPH NEWITTER**. The final round winners were **RALPH** and **JOHN** as well as **DON BREISMEISTER** and **BILL FAKUNDINY**.

3. Platform Tennis: Members play from 10 am to 11 am on Tuesdays at Loughlin Field in Cos Cob.

4. Bridge: Notable total scores were: **JOHN FEBLES**, 3,130, **ANDRE MAZUREK**, 2,610, and **ED MASTOLINI**, 2,100.

5. **Hearts:** This week there were eight players at two tables at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center. On table one a total three games were played with **JOE DOWLING** winning two and shooting the moon four times and **BOB SHULLMAN** winning one game. At table two a total of two games were played and both were won by **MICHAEL AMBROSINO**.

6. **Tai Chi:** Meetings resume this coming Monday at 9:30 in Old Greenwich. Bring your stiffest joints and worst balance! Spouses are welcome. Contact **WILL** at wdmorrison@gmail.com for details.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

MICHAEL AMBROSINO then returned to the microphone prior to the presentation at 11 am to provide members with his review of “Tony’s” at the J House, an Italian steak house, which is located on the Post Road in Riverside. **MICHAEL’s** bottom line for Tony’s that it is a restaurant that he would recommend because the food is very good and the service is very attentive, which compensates for the noise level and the somewhat “pricey” menu. However, he would not patronize it too frequently and would save it for a special occasion, especially if one is entertaining younger guests such as one’s sons and daughters. If Tony’s is a restaurant you are considering, **MICHAEL** will be happy to fill you in with more details.

TODAY’S SPEAKER



Jerry Pollock (l) Interviews Joshua Gersen (r) at the RMA Meeting. Photos: Pete Uhry

After the coffee break, **JERRY POLLACK** and Joshua Gersen then sat up front and engaged in a very interesting and informative hour-long discussion of Joshua's musical background and his thinking about his potentially becoming the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra's musical director and conductor. **JERRY** based the 15 questions he posed to Joshua prior to the Q & A session that occurred towards the end of the hour on the questions that were asked of the three other candidates for the position who have appeared to date.

When asked about his musical background, Joshua responded that he believes it is somewhat "unique" as both of his parents were music lovers and they told him when he was older that he became involved with music when he was only one or two years of age. He could read music when he was about two years old and started taking piano lessons when he was only three years old. His recall is that he decided to become a conductor when he was only four or five years of age! When Joshua was then asked about the relationship between a conductor and the musicians in an orchestra, his response was a conductor is "there to help musicians to play their best." He then went on to state that his way of conducting is all about non-verbal communication between himself and the musicians. Joshua then stated that he is a "working class conductor" and it's all about his helping musicians to be their best using his right and left hands.

During the Q & A session, one attendee asked Joshua a very intriguing question: how he would make the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra more successful? His response was he would make the orchestra more successful by:

- Raising the quality of the music performed at the concerts by selecting more interesting music.
- Raising the visibility of the orchestra by collaborating with the audience that attends the concerts, and
- Maximizing the performance of the musicians; as he stated "...it's about the team; it's we, not I"

As this summary of the discussion between **JERRY** and Joshua cannot delve sufficiently into the depth of the discussion that occurred, it is suggested that those interested in Joshua's responses to all 15 questions posed to him, as well as to the Q & A, go to the RMA website and click on the video of his presentation.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Past President **PETE UHRY** has asked that we include a few “historical” RMA pictures, with a question of the week. Last week, we saw **JIM SANTORA** sink a hole-in-one on No. 7 at the Griff, In 2014. This week, inquiring minds want to know, where were all these RMA men on the right lined up in front of a row of porta-potties? How many are still active today? (CBB editors will judge the most original answers and report them in a future CBB.)



Do you have any pictures of past RMA activities?

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

TO CBB CONTRIBUTORS: Scribe for the next meeting, on March 2, will be →**JOE MANCINELLI**←. Please send a copy of any remarks you want included in the CBB to jlmanc@optonline.net.

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 Scribe Tribe. 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.

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Visit our website at <https://greenwichrma.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	1:00 pm	Hearts at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center	John Kavanagh - jjkct176@gmail.com
Wednesdays	12:30 pm	Bridge	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)

*Day & time of some events may vary; check with contact