

# The Ruthmere Record

THE RUTHMERE FOUNDATION, INC. • 302 E. BEARDSLEY AVENUE • ELKHART, INDIANA 46514

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

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## GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING!

By ROBERT B. BEARDSLEY, FOUNDING DIRECTOR



*A happy group at the Orsay: Scott Pinto, Robert Beardsley, Sheila & Jim Bridenstine, Christy Williams Coombs, Bill & Lori Firstenberger*

It was a “Grand Night for Singing!” November 12, 2019, at Sotheby’s Auction House in New York City when at 7:30pm the auctioneer banged his gavel. “Sold for \$6,200,000” rang out on our precious Auguste Rodin’s French limestone sculpture, The Fallen Caryatid Carrying Her Stone. We exhaled, turned to each other and smiled around our table of six—myself and friend Scott Pinto, Ruthmere Board member Jim Bridenstine and lovely wife Sheila, and our Executive Director Bill Firstenberger with his beautiful wife Lori. Our handshakes were cut short.

The auctioneer continued, “With the hammer! Very clearly with the hammer, thank you José,” acknowledging that, simultaneous to his gavel drop, an unseen bidder (spotted by Sotheby’s staff member José) had upped the bid to \$6,300,000 in the narrowest margin of time possible. What just happened?! The bidding was still going! We sat back down in amazement.

The somewhat perturbed agent of the “original winning bidder” on the phone, stared back at the auctioneer in disbelief. The auctioneer leaned in hard to the podium with an equal stare back into the bidding agent’s eyes that I’ll never forget. After what seemed like an eternity of silence without blinking he flatly said to her, “Give me four” like some kind of Jedi mind trick command. And it worked! An obedient “Six-four” came from the agent’s lips (as if she ever possessed the power to say no to this auctioneer in the first place), and 15 seconds later after José’s bidder relented, the hammer came down a second time, and this time it stuck for good. “Sold for \$6,400,000!” (cont’d page 2)

# GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING! (CONT'D)

By ROBERT B. BEARDSLEY, FOUNDED DIRECTOR

The anonymous winning bidder on the phone paid a further buyer's premium to Sotheby's, bringing the published sale price to \$7,553,600, if you want to get technical. Sotheby's staff poured the champagne, and we were on cloud nine as we watched the rest of the auction, which included artworks bearing names like Monet, Renior, Picasso, Degas, Gauguin, Chagall and Van Gogh. The scene felt as surreal as a Dalí painting of melted clocks.

After the sale ended, we were taken by cab to the Orsay Restaurant, one of New York's finest French bistros, and an exact replica of my favorite restaurant in Paris by the same name, where a table of eight reserved by Sotheby's was waiting. Joining us were Senior Vice President and Head of Evening Sales Julian Dawes, a man very young for such a position, and Vice President of Museum Services Christy Williams Coombs, a dynamic fine art professional, highly experienced beyond her years and hailing from Michigan. With our group complete, we commenced an evening recounting the highlights of the sale, sampling a variety of international wines and epicurean delights—and to our Executive Director's elation, all of it on Sotheby's dime. But most meaningful, we shared our experiences of the journey the Fallen Caryatid had taken all of us on during the past six months.



This extraordinary art piece began in its place of honor in Ruthmere's upstairs Gallery Landing. We have had it displayed there on a plinth of Belgian marble made in Portugal over 40 years ago. This was the place that Sotheby's agents, and representatives of their arch-rival auction house, Christies, each had their turn at an initial in-person viewing. Estimates of what it would bring were all over the place at first, but "millions" was the common denominator we heard most.

Sotheby's won the competition to be Ruthmere's partner with more than just their proposal offer. It was their manner and their character. The deal was made, and after a unanimous vote by the Ruthmere Board of Directors, a myriad of logistical arrangements happened with blinding speed, leading up to August 12th. On that day Sotheby's picked up the Caryatid under armed guard for its trip to New York. In just three short months from that date, it would belong to someone else.

Shortly after arriving in New York, the sculpture was sent to the Musée Rodin in Paris for verification of its authenticity, and a brief exhibition in the "home country" where it originated in the 1890s. Actually, I lived in a French chateau for eight years just twenty miles from the same quarry that produced our Caryatid. It then returned to New York for conservation cleaning, photography and catalog preparation before going back across the pond for a ten-day exhibit in the London Sotheby's Gallery. Its final destination was back in Manhattan for the two-week exhibition leading up to the November 12th Evening Impressionist Sale, the biggest single global art sale event of 2019. That's a lot of miles for a 130-year-old piece of limestone!

How and why we acquired our Caryatid is itself an interesting story. I suppose it began as long ago as 1960, when my father, Walter R. Beardsley (1905-1980), became friends with Nelson A. Rockefeller at the Republican National Convention in Chicago. Nelson was known as an avid collector of modern art, and led the way for affluent businessmen to follow him in collecting something as effete as art.

In 1960, Nelson ran unsuccessfully for President, but he was a powerhouse of fun and affability. He had a charming way of winking [It's just you and me] that won me over, but Walter was for Nixon. I remember Nelson turning his full charm on Walter one day as they talked about art, of all things, on a crowded, noisy convention floor. "Really, Walter, you should get into modern art. It's a whole new world and a lot of fun [wink, wink to me]."

Thinking back, that was the genesis of Walter's collecting. He began buying stuff he liked—"I buy what I like."—until he met Charles "Chuck" Feingarten, a dealer in modern art in Los Angeles and Chicago. Chuck talked "art" in man's language, often using football analogies like "this will be a real touchdown for you." But one time it wasn't.



## GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING!

In 1965, a boxed crate containing a small and quite realistic bronze bust of Balzac, about 14” high, arrived. It didn’t look like anything in the several Rodin books I had in my library at the farm and I said so. “Take it over to The Snite [Notre Dame’s Art Museum] and see what they say.” They agreed with me: it was not a genuine Rodin by any stretch of the imagination. Chuck’s bill of \$18,000 for the piece arrived the next day, and the bust was returned along with it.

But Chuck and Walter remained friends. Chuck was always in there, pitching. About two years later, in 1967, Walter got an excited phone call from Chuck, now in Chicago. “Walter! I just got the best Rodin I’ve ever handled. It’s one of only twelve limestone pieces he ever sculpted himself, and some day it will be worth A LOT. I’ll send pictures today. You gotta have it. You know I’ll give you a good price.”

The pictures arrived. They were impressive, but \$65,000 was a lot of money, since I couldn’t discover any Rodin that ever sold for that much. I reported my findings. But Walter smelled a deal, and he was a good businessman. “I’ll offer him \$50,000. He’ll jump up and down, but he’ll go for it.” And he did. It arrived days later. Everybody in the Executive office at Miles crowded in to see it. I heard quiet voices saying, “just what is it...how much did he pay for THAT?” At the time, I remember being reminded of the fable about the Emperor’s New Clothes.

I had a 50” high, plywood square box made as a base for it that I covered with a red velvet cloth. “She” looked pretty good up there, I must say, and there she sat for almost ten years for all of Walter’s visitors to gaze and wonder at. And then the awful day arrived when Bayer, AG, made a successful tender offer and Miles Laboratories, Inc. was sold.

Since Walter was far and away the largest shareholder in the company, his capital gains tax in 1977 was huge. He considered several 501(C)(3) qualified entities to reduce his tax burden, like the local hospital, Andover, and Princeton, but he was not ready to sacrifice his Caryatid until 1978, when he gifted it to Ruthmere. I never knew what tax value was placed on the gift of this grand piece, but we got it for a number of good reasons.

Walter realized its tax-reduction value, of course, but looking ahead, he also made clear to me, then Ruthmere’s Director, that the Caryatid could be sold by the museum if it was desirable to do so in the future. I made him carefully aware that while Ruthmere was not an Art Museum, it was qualified to receive his art as well as several other pieces in his collection, which eventually found their way into our collections. He saw the business sense of this and happily complied, and thereby made possible the benefit we harvested in 2019. Walter died in 1980, not long after his gifts were in place.

Ruthmere is one of the finest small historical house museums in the country and has been for almost 50 years, and an Elkhart landmark since 1908, but the costs of purchasing and refurbishing Ruthmere to its present condition were well over \$1,000,000 in 1970 dollars. Since then, the costs of operating our “jewel box” have escalated in proportion to our growing visitation and programs. We recognize that all our resources must pull their weight to work for the community’s and the organization’s maximum benefit.

Ruthmere is my life’s work. I’ve lost sleep at times, worrying about its future. While I’ve seen marvelous improvements over the past decade in particular, I still sometimes wonder what will happen to Ruthmere when I’m gone. The recent Ruthmere Champions sustainability funding campaign has successfully begun to fill our gas tank, but a major infusion would be most helpful to accelerate the process. I wondered, maybe one of our Rodin pieces? But which one, and how much would it bring? (cont'd on page 4)



*Walter R. Beardsley (1905-1980), combined a love of art and public service. Beside him in his Miles office stands the Rodin sculpture, The Fallen Caryatid.*

## GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING! (CONT'D)

By ROBERT B. BEARDSLEY, FOUNDING DIRECTOR

There was never really any question that our beloved Fallen Caryatid was the best candidate, and a host of other legitimate concerns related to associated costs of insuring it, and the risk of accidental damage, helped to make the decision for us. Our path to get to this point has involved hard work, connections, and our remarkably helpful friends at Sotheby's. Our team consisted of our own very supportive Board, its officers and, of course, our wonderful staff. In particular, I want to thank Ruthmere Board member and former Director of the Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Jim Bridenstine, our Executive Director, Bill Firstenberger, our Secretary/Treasurer, George Freese, and our Board President Edward Beardsley, for all their time and efforts that have brought about this salvation.

To misquote Shakespeare's Macbeth, "Money knits up the unraveled sleeve of care." On the night of the Sotheby's sale, we returned from our celebratory dinner at the magnificent Orsay to our hotel on the Upper East Side. I turned out the nightstand light, tucked myself into a strange bed in an unfamiliar room, and I had my best night's sleep in many years.



*The Fallen Caryatid Carrying Her Stone  
by Auguste Rodin*

## FIRST NIGHT AT THE ARIA

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Ruthmere has built a reputation over the past several years for unique gala fundraisers--The Elkhart Black Tie, The Heist, One Night at Ruthmere and Cocktails on Beardsley. 2020 will not disappoint with First Night at the Aria! The Hotel Elkhart renovation project has captured the attention of the entire community. What is being done to Elkhart's beloved tallest landmark, and how will it be given new life for the next 100 years? You can be the FIRST to find out this summer at First Night at the Aria: A Ruthmere Event!

By holding the inaugural event at the new Hilton Tapestry Collection Hotel Elkhart, attendees to First Night at the Aria will explore Elkhart's first boutique hotel, dine on the ninth floor "Room on Top of the City," and kick up their heels in the chic Aria Ballroom. To reinforce Ruthmere's year-long celebration of women in history, art and culture, Gibson

Insurance is underwriting a one-night-only exhibit of "Women in Fine Art" drawing from Ruthmere's collections. Entertainment will feature the powerhouse vocals of the Janet Hines-Norris Band, and dinner service will offer a gourmet menu from Navarre Hospitality. Who knows what other surprises might be in store for this night of firsts?

Reserve your seats after April 1st by calling Jennifer Johns at 574-264-0330 ext. 104, or book online at Ruthmere.org. Seating is limited. Underwriting opportunities are still available.

If you want to be remembered, you have to be the first.



# RUTHMERE'S 2020 CONCERT SEASON IS BIGGER THAN EVER

By MARK DODDINGTON, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Building on its already deep-reaching musical roots, Ruthmere Museum is stretching its branches farther than ever in 2020. This year, in addition to our legendary Fall Concert Series and the wonderfully successful Beardsley Piano Prize (now in its third year), we are also “Beta-testing” a Spring Concert series!

**Possible postponement see Calendar** - May 8th Ruthmere partners again with the Fischhoff Competition to host an Elkhart Soirée at 7pm in Ruthmere's Game Room. Meet the competitors in a relaxed setting and enjoy a reception following the performance.

On Thursday, June 4, Beardsley prize winner Nicholas Susi will return to the Ruthmere Game Room at 7:00pm. Based on his performances at Ruthmere in 2018, we anticipate Nick's concert to be a wild success that will lead to a full-fledged series for the spring of 2021. Keep checking our website [Ruthmere.org](http://Ruthmere.org) for updates and reservation details.



The 2020 Robert Buchanan Beardsley Piano Prize Competition will be held on Saturday, September 19, at noon. Seats for this event will be available to reserve on our website for only \$5.00 per person for an entire afternoon's entertainment. If the first two years are anything to judge by, this year's competition promises to be sensational!

Our Fall Concert Series will kick off on Thursday, October 15, with the winner of the Beardsley Prize, whoever he or she may be. The 2020 winner will be adding their name to the prestigious list of past winners: 2017 honorary winner Nicholas Roth, 2018 Nick Susi and 2019 Yixiang Hou.

On Thursday, October 29, we welcome the AR Piano Duo, Arianna Körting and Robin Giesbrecht, in a heady mixture of harmony and fire as they pit our 1955 Steinway Concert Grand against our 1938 Baldwin Baby Grand. Both graduates of Juilliard, they have performed together and separately all around the globe, including music mecca Carnegie Hall.

Two-time Beardsley Prize finalist Ariadne Antipa joins us on Thursday, November 12, bringing her amazing playing skills along with a cause dear to her heart: helping teens and young adults overcome drug and alcohol addiction. Her program, which fits neatly into Ruthmere's 2020 theme honoring women in art and culture, is designed to interweave this difficult subject with the transcendent joys of music to the benefit and elevation of all.

Finally, continuing on a tradition of many years, Nicholas Roth will present his Black Friday concert on November 27. A long-established Ruthmere icon, Roth has been tickling the ivories of our Steinway since his early youth when Robert Beardsley himself invited the young Elkhart native to practice in the mansion's Game Room. If ever two entities were meant to be together, it is Nicholas Roth and our Steinway.

Consider becoming a Ruthmere Concert Sponsor for just \$500 and get reserved seats to all concerts along with the bonus of pre-concert receptions. Concert tickets are \$25.00 per concert for Ruthmere members or \$40.00 per concert for non-members. Details will be available at [Ruthmere.org](http://Ruthmere.org) in the coming months. For additional details contact us at (574) 264-0330, or to reserve seats by phone.

# THE YEAR OF THE WOMAN - THE CENTENNIAL OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT

By ANDREA BARBOUR, OUTREACH COORDINATOR

August 18th, 1920 – Tennessee becomes the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, giving the two-thirds state majority needed to make it a national law. Millions of women across the country celebrate the passing of one of the biggest hurdles in the history of women's rights. The amendment reads: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex" – thus ending the struggle for voting equality. A hundred years later, American women of 2020 have never known a life without the vote, thanks to the struggles and hard-fought battles of the women before us.



Ruthmere, in partnership with several other organizations throughout Elkhart County, is celebrating the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment in many exciting ways! The

WE VOTE 2020 partnership is an effort to promote observance of the centennial through collaboration, education, celebration and conservation. Many volunteers are involved in this county-wide initiative, but some of the initial leaders include the Elkhart Rotary Club, Elkhart Chapter of the League of Women Voters, Wellfield Botanic Gardens, First Presbyterian Church of Elkhart, Premier Arts, the Elkhart Public Library, Nappanee Public Library and the Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau. More organizations are welcome to join. Through Ruthmere, there are quite a few ways that you can join the celebration!

## RUTHMERE EVENTS CELEBRATING WOMEN

*Visit the Indiana Historical Society Special Exhibit – “Securing the Vote: Women’s Suffrage in Indiana”*

From May 12th to June 5th, 2020, the Havilah Beardsley House will host a new traveling exhibit from the Indiana Historical Society, “Securing the Vote: Women’s Suffrage in Indiana.” This exhibit will explore how women across Indiana passionately labored for suffrage through countless meetings, campaigns, and other grassroots efforts. Despite many defeats and setbacks, they persisted toward the goal of full citizenship and the power to make change through voting. “Securing the Vote” is a project of the Indiana Women’s Suffrage Centennial, catalyzed by Indiana Humanities, the Indianapolis Propylaeum, the Indiana Historical Society, and the Indiana Historical Bureau, with support from Lilly Endowment Inc.

## *Attend a Ruthmere Gallery Talk*

All eleven of our 2020 Gallery Talks will focus on some aspect of women’s history or historical achievements by women. Here are the remaining talks:

- **Postponed** - April 9 – Imps & Hummingbirds, Daisy Makeig-Jones at Wedgwood – George Freese, Ruthmere Board of Directors at Ruthmere Museum
- **Postponed** - May 8 – Rachel Beardsley – Cindy Neer, Docent – Havilah Beardsley House
- June 6 – All-American Girls Professional Baseball League – Kristi Kuntzman, Registrar at The History Museum South Bend at Havilah Beardsley House
- July 7 – Elkhart's Women Prominent in Indiana's Right to Vote --Kathy Reedy, Indiana State Librarian for the DAR Ruthmere Museum
- August 5 – Hoosier Women Artists – Randy Roberts, Assistant Curator at Midwest Museum of American Art at Ruthmere
- September 3 – Rhetoric and Reality: A Century of Votes for Women – Christina Wolbrecht, Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame – Ruthmere Museum
- October 2 – Quilts and Their Secrets – Karen Nicholson, Docent – Ruthmere Museum
- November 4 – Elizabeth Beardsley – Joy Olsen, Collections Manager & Andrea Barbour, Outreach Curator – Ruthmere
- December 2 – The Women of Tiffany Studios – Marty Weber, Docent – Ruthmere Museum



# THE YEAR OF THE WOMAN

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## *Join Us for a Suffragette Tea*

Join us on Sunday, May 17th, 2020, for one of our famous teas – with a unique twist! This suffragette-themed tea will combine both educational history and the chance for women to gather together and celebrate. Dress up in the clothes of the suffragette era and take photos, enjoy tea from a tea company founded and owned by a woman, and play a few games that will teach you a thing or two about women’s history. We’ll have prizes, exclusive gifts, and, yes, even a designated place where you can smoke your cigars like the rebellious women you are. This is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to step into the shoes of a suffragette!

## *Follow Us on Social Media*

For each month of 2020, Ruthmere’s social media pages will be sharing interesting stories, facts, and photos about different topics in women’s history, art, and culture. So far, we’ve explored the life of Elizabeth Beardsley in January, examined the stories of local African American women in February, and shared some of the women artists and subject matters behind the art in Ruthmere’s collection in March. We have a lot more heading your way throughout the year – stay tuned for other topics, such as women of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, historical women’s groups, and even the women of Ruthmere’s staff/volunteers! Follow Ruthmere Museum at Facebook, [com/RuthmereMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/RuthmereMuseum) or on our Instagram, [@RuthmereMuseum](https://www.instagram.com/RuthmereMuseum), to learn more about women’s history or join the discussion.

There are countless exciting ways to celebrate across the county in 2020. Check out the website at [2020wevote.org](https://2020wevote.org) or our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/wevote2020](https://www.facebook.com/wevote2020) to keep up with events and news.



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CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE  
RUTHMERE MUSEUM CAMPUS!**

**IF AN UPDATE IS  
REQUIRED, PLEASE CALL  
574-264-0330 EXT. 107**

# GIVE LIKE A CHAMPION!

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Ruthmere Champions concept is simple. To be recognized as a Ruthmere Champion a collective gift commitment of \$25,000 or more is made to Ruthmere holdings over a 1-to 5-year period. Qualifying Champion support includes membership, Ruthmere Forever gifts, special event underwriting, and program sponsorships. Champion gifts can go toward endowed funds (which earn an additional match) that build long-term sustainability, or directly toward current Ruthmere program needs. Finally, Champions can be individuals, businesses, or teams.

Contact Executive Director Bill Firstenberger at 574-264-0330 ext. 105 or at [bfirstenberger@ruthmere.org](mailto:bfirstenberger@ruthmere.org) to learn more about becoming a Ruthmere Champion today!

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# ELKHART BUSINESS LEGACY HALL OF FAME EXHIBIT

By PAIGE ERWIN, EXHIBITS AND FACILITIES COORDINATOR



With the start of the 2020 season, Ruthmere and Junior Achievement are looking for new spaces to host the Business Legacy Hall of Fame traveling exhibit. At the end of 2019, these banners gathered the attention of over 179,204 visitors.

There are 11 banners in the set, approximately 60" x 18" each in size. This exhibit will be rotating throughout Elkhart County all year and multiple banners can be hosted at the same time. If you are interested in hosting this exhibit, or have questions please contact Exhibits and Facilities Coordinator, Paige Erwin by email at [perwin@ruthmere.org](mailto:perwin@ruthmere.org) or by phone at 574-264-0330 ext. 113.



## NEW AND IMPROVED

By JOY OLSEN, COLLECTIONS MANAGER/WEDDING COORDINATOR

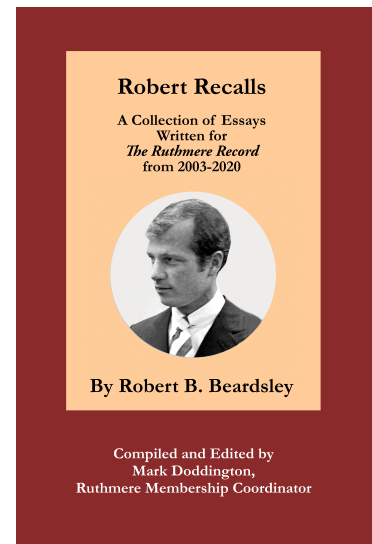
Once again, the shingle for the Ruthmere gift shop is proudly displayed on the signpost in front of Ruthmere.

What a great day this is to offer fine giftware in a sweet room in the mansion. Papered with Waverly wallpaper, the room once served as the dining room for the Ruthmere staff when the house was newly built. It is now designated for a retail space and works well for the visitor to linger and shop. Perhaps they will purchase an item that will later remind them of their wonderful visit they had in Elkhart, Indiana.

From refrigerator magnets, keyrings or coffee mugs with the Alka-Seltzer SPEEDY icon, the items are functional reminders of the beautiful home of Albert and Elizabeth Beardsley. I am proud to mention that the gift shop offers items that celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment guaranteeing and protecting women's constitutional right to vote.

Come peek at these items offered in Ruthmere's new and improved gift shop. Perhaps consider a purchase of a pretty tea pot for you or a friend. Tea gatherings were the place where women shared their dreams and made their plans for a better future.

This giftware is meant to celebrate and honor the suffragists of the Beardsley family. Thank you, Rachel Calhoun Beardsley, Susan Ray Beardsley, Elizabeth Baldwin Beardsley and Helen Maude Beardsley who trail-blazed a path for women in the future.



New Book!  
*Robert Recalls*

## ROBERT RECALLS COMING TO RUTHMERE GIFT SHOP

By MARK DODDINGTON, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

By popular demand, Ruthmere is publishing the collected reminiscences of Robert Beardsley. *Robert Recalls: A Collection of Essays Written for the Ruthmere Record, 2003-2020*, gathers thirty-three articles written by Robert, along with poignant photos, historic and contemporary, into a 150-page paperback that will be available in our Gift Shop in early April.

Sponsored by Robert's cousin, Bruce Combs, and compiled, designed, and edited by yours truly, Mark Doddington, *Robert Recalls* captures all the vivid, colorful detail of Robert's many adventures over the last eighty-plus years, including meeting such luminaries as Bob Hope, Alice Roosevelt Longworth, and even Jane Fonda! Read about his white-knuckle Atlantic crossing, his fond memories of houses long lost to history, and the many steps of Auguste Rodin's storied Fallen Caryatid.

Divided into three sections—People, Places and Pieces—*Robert Recalls* is a quick, lively, and emotionally-packed chronicle of a lifetime spent in pursuit of beauty and the betterment of Elkhart.

# ONE ON ONE WITH MATTHEW GRAYBIL

By MARK DODDINGTON, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

After a stunning concert performance on November 7, 2019, Matthew Graybil found himself the object of a roaring standing ovation and a long meet-and-greet with a grateful and curious audience. Holding a Master's degree from Juilliard, this New York City denizen has had a lifetime of experience in only a handful of years, leading to a compelling and envy-inducing life. I had a chance to talk to him for quite a while, and found myself with more questions than there was time to ask. Following up by email, I conducted an interview with Matthew in January of this year.



**Mark Doddington:** One question that kept coming up after the concert is how old are you? What year were you born?

**Matthew Graybil:** I'm 32 years old. I was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1987 on Mother's Day.

**M.D.:** What did your parents do for a living? Did they encourage your love of music?

**M.G.:** My Dad owns an auto dealership that has been in the family since before the end of World War I. My Mom has a background in marketing but stayed at home to raise my older brother and [me].

**M.D.:** You seem unusually accomplished for someone so young. How long do you practice each day? How do you maintain such focus and dedication?

**M.G.:** I do my best to define practice in terms of quality, not quantity, but on average, I spend at least four hours per day at the piano. Without love, dedication and focus are difficult, so a love for music and the piano is my greatest motivator. I've always had an obsessive nature, and early on the piano became one of the ways I channeled it. Now, I'd say that I am still driven by the same desire to improve and grow as a musician. I've always been fascinated by the recorded history of the piano and its different traditions, so the pursuit of the ideals and standards of the great musicians that I grew up listening to, and the eternal pursuit of finding something new to say, are a constant source of inspiration and great motivational fuel. In that regard, I'm reminded of the words of Rachmaninov: "Music is enough for one lifetime, but one lifetime is not enough for music."

**M.D.:** How did you first come to love the piano?

**M.G.:** The moment I remember falling in love with it was when I was about eight and I heard the great American pianist, Andre Watts, perform with my hometown orchestra. Everything about the occasion struck a chord with me: his presence on stage, the way he dressed, and of course the music, which was Rachmaninov's second piano concerto. In one fell swoop, fell in love with music, the piano, and with the idea of being a performer. When the performance was over, I turned to my mother and said, "I want to be like him!"

**M.D.:** Do you play any other instruments? If so, why do you focus so intensely on the piano?

**M.G.:** My older brother, Jonathan, who is now a composer, had begun to study both the piano and the violin before me. Initially, I was even more drawn to the sound of the violin, but his violin teacher was rather strict, whereas his piano teacher was warm and gentle. I therefore chose the piano. I don't play any other instrument, but if the tables had been turned, for all I know I would have become a violinist.

**M.D.:** How did your particular passion for Debussy come about?

**M.G.:** I first became fascinated with Debussy by reading his letters and musical criticisms. Most musical figures boil down to standard bearers, revolutionaries, or reactionaries. Debussy was the latter two. When I research an idea for a program, I like to approach it from the perspective of musical storytelling. It can only add to the performance when an audience member becomes immersed in the time, place, and personality of the composer. My hope is that, by presenting familiar music in a way that invites the listener to experience and perceive it with fresh ears, their appreciation and understanding of it will be enriched. A character like Debussy is perfect for such a program. He pushed the boundaries of the piano and of harmony, but where he was truly radical was in his compositional process, which above all else was drawn from the sounds of the natural world. Through this, he was able to create a musical vision that changed the course of twentieth-century music in many ways. It's also no secret that he was a gadfly, so these elements combined make him particularly fun to present and perform.



## ONE ON ONE WITH MATTHEW GRAYBIL

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**M.D.:** Have you recorded anything for the mass market? Any future plans in the works?

**M.G.:** Yes, and yes. My debut album included works by Brahms and Schubert for CAG Records. The second was a recording of the complete Chopin Etudes, Op. 10, for the Chopin Project, and the third was a recording of a work by Walter Piston for Steinway records. Most recently, I finished a recording with a violinist friend involving a project called Violins of Hope, an organization that restores stringed instruments with a connection to the Holocaust. That recording will be released on Albany Records in the coming months.

**M.D.:** Obviously, you love classical music. What other types of music do you enjoy? Any particular artists?

**M.G.:** I listen to many different types of music, but I have a particular love for jazz. Two jazz pianists that I admire are Art Tatum and Bill Evans, who incidentally was influenced by French impressionism—including Debussy.

**M.D.:** You've competed in many competitions around the world. Have you ever been on the judges' side of the table?

**M.G.:** I have on several occasions. It's not an easy position to be in by any means.

**M.D.:** What, for you, would be the ultimate performing experience?

**M.G.:** It doesn't happen every day, but in certain special moments, you can feel a palpable connection with the audience, as though they become part of the performance and you are living and breathing every moment and every phrase together. It is not about any type of technical or musical perfection, but is something that you can sense in the air, a kind of chemistry between audience and performer. I'm convinced that it is in those moments that the magic of live performance occurs. It is a sensation that is almost indescribable, but when it happens, it is the ultimate performance experience.

**M.D.:** Without getting too personal, what about your private life? Is your girlfriend also a musician?

**M.G.:** Yes, my girlfriend, Rhiannon Banerdt, is a violinist in and up-and-coming string quartet.

**M.D.:** Does your exhaustive travel schedule cause any difficulties in maintaining a relationship?

**M.G.:** Coming from the same profession, we're lucky that we have a lot of understanding and perspective on what the other does. Being away from each other is never easy, but it teaches you to value the time that you get to spend in the same place more. We try to perform together as a duo anytime we get the chance.

**M.D.:** Tell us about your non-profit venture.

**M.G.:** I am the executive director of an educational concert series in Manhattan, "Piano Evenings with David Dubal." The sessions are hosted by David Dubal, who wrote many of the most notable books on the piano and its lore. Each week, we have three guest pianists, so the audience has a chance to meet and hear some of the top young pianists in an intimate setting. The pianists themselves have an opportunity to try out repertoire in front of an enthusiastic crowd. David Dubal is a fascinating character and he cultivates an environment for the pianists that is musically liberated and encourages them to experiment and take risks. Sometimes, we'll have seasoned performers stop by to try out repertoire before they go on to perform at major venues. I grew up reading Dubal's books and listening to his radio programs, so becoming a part of the organization feels like coming full-circle in a way.

**M.D.:** What other interests do you have besides music? Any plans to pursue those on a professional basis?

**M.G.:** I enjoy keeping up with current affairs, reading (especially fiction), and traveling. Whenever I visit a new place, I'm particularly interested in trying the food and seeing the art that it has to offer. I follow tennis but have never played. I love playing table tennis, though. Much as I love each of these, I don't plan to pursue them professionally.

**M.D.:** Any regrets?

**M.G.:** There are certain things that I wish I had done when I was younger, such as learn a second language, but I do my best to savor every moment, not take anything for granted and not liv[ing] in the past.

For my part, I believe it safe to say we are all grateful Matthew elected to focus his studies on the piano. As a piano junkie myself, albeit a non-playing one, I can appreciate his dedication and devotion to this beloved instrument. If I never learn to play it myself, and it seems highly unlikely that I will, I can at least live the dream vicariously through Matthew and the many other sensational pianists who have graced Ruthmere's Game Room over the years. My thanks to Matthew for taking time out of his busy schedule to indulge my curiosity, and for giving us a glance at the man behind the ivories.

## PERK UP YOUR SUMMER WITH COFFEE ON THE PIAZZA

By MARK DODDINGTON, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Our classic Coffee on the Piazza is coming swiftly our way. Every Saturday morning in June, July (except July 4), and August, Ruthmere will open its gates to everyone for a free morning of coffee, live music, games, and children's activities. We will also feature Rise N' Roll doughnuts for a small donation, as well as our usual guided museum tours. Our gates open each Saturday morning at 9:45, with an hour of live music beginning at 10:30. Twelve local artists will be here to entertain you this summer. June welcomes first-time Ruthmere guest Chris Burch (June 6), Adrienne Frailey (13), McKenzie Brummond (20), and John Smith (Johnny & I) (27).

A shortened July brings Darby O. Bell (11), The Cool Change Band (18), and newcomer Mykayla Cynthia (25). Brandon Ryan, another newbie to Ruthmere, leads off August (1), followed by fellow firsty Mike Nyhuis (8), The Ember Jar (15), and John Bahler (22). Waterbound closes out the season on August 29. We are welcoming back Awakening Realm, who will be conducting yoga classes on the West Lawn, and Craft of Elkhart who will be teaching a class on plein air painting with Ruthmere grounds as the subject on designated Saturdays. We thank our sponsors, family of the late Phyllis Myers, Tom and Karen, for making these lively events available to the public. Come, sit back and enjoy a relaxing morning with music, coffee and more.

## MEET BREE DEMORROW, RUTHMERE CAMPUS GARDENER

By MARK DODDINGTON, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR



Ruthmere is happy to welcome back Labreeska “Bree” DeMorrow to our staff. An Advanced Master Gardener, Bree brings a lifelong passion for nature and green things to Ruthmere. “I love plants. I grew up kind of in the country...I don't like to be stuck inside very long,” she says. In addition to her experience as an Advanced Master Gardener, Bree has also completed a Master Naturalist program through Elkhart County Parks.

While in high school, Bree completed a horticultural program at the Career Center. During her senior year, she took part in an internship at the former Pickrell Garden Center here in Elkhart. In the early 2010s, Bree worked on staff at Ruthmere for two years before beginning a five-year stint at Wellfield Botanic Gardens. Now she returns to Ruthmere with renewed gusto and some very colorful plans for the coming seasons. In addition to continuing the museum's tradition of historical accuracy in its plant beds, Bree is also considering reintroducing herbs and vegetables into Elizabeth Beardsley's kitchen-side garden by the wisteria trellis. In keeping with our theme of patriotism and American history, she has also expressed an interest in planting a classic Victory Garden. “I'm figuring things out,” she says. “I'm excited to be here.” And we are very pleased to have her back.

## SHINING LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT

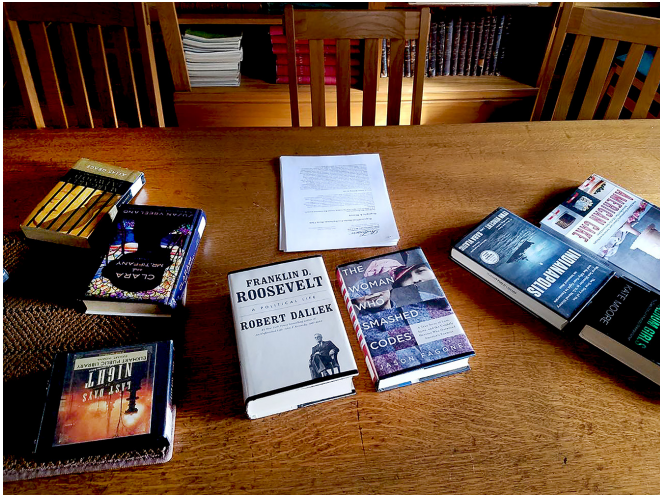
By JENNIFER JOHNS, CURATOR

The saying goes “everything old is new again” and that rings true at Ruthmere. Elizabeth Beardsley redecorated the house in the 1920s and one thing she did was add new lighting. At the top of the stairs on the second floor landing and on the ceiling of the staircase, she added two electric lamp posts and a chandelier. The chandelier has remained in place, however, the lamp posts were removed and crated. When the Fallen Caryatid was sold last year the markings of where one of the lamp posts originally stood were rediscovered. Our collections manager, Joy Olsen, knew exactly where they were stored. So with a little staff manpower, the crated lamp post was transported from storage and reinstalled to the second floor landing. Next time you come for a tour of Ruthmere, make sure you check out our original piece returned to its home location.



## RUTHMERE BOOK CLUB DEBUT

By LOIS TOMASZEWSKI, PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Books and history combined successfully for the organizational meeting of the Ruthmere Book Club. Designed as an outreach program for both Ruthmere Foundation members and the community, the Ruthmere Book Club brings bibliophiles and history-buffs together once a month for discussions about fiction and non-fiction books.

At the organizational meeting on Feb. 20. More than 20 attendees gathered in the Robert Beardsley Arts Reference Library to decide on the meeting structure and choose the first month's selection, a non-fiction book written by Jason Fagone titled *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies*. This is the story of Elizebeth Freidman, from Huntington, Indiana who, along with her husband, invented the cryptology together and breaking codes for America in the early 20th century assisting in the World War II effort.

Next month members will choose another book to read. The club will alternate between non-fiction and fiction selections. The only requirement is that the books reflect on history.

Response to the announcement of the book club has been tremendous, with almost 40 people signed up to take part. To ensure that everyone has an equal chance at participating in the discussion, the Ruthmere Book Club will meet twice, in the afternoon and the evening. Members can choose which meeting to attend. The Book Club meets the third Thursday of the month at 3 p.m. and at 6 p.m. in the Arts Reference Library.

A Facebook Group – Ruthmere Book Club - is active online for book club members. This is a convenient place to post announcements, recommend book selections and even discuss the books club members are reading. That way those who are unable to attend a meeting for whatever reason can still contribute and be a part of the dynamic. It is a private group, open only to Book Club members. Search for Ruthmere Book Club on Facebook or find it under groups on the Ruthmere Museum Facebook Page. Partnering with Ruthmere for this program are the Elkhart Public Library, The BookWorm Book Store in downtown Elkhart and Fables Book Store in downtown Goshen.

## WE WANT YOU AS A VOLUNTEER

By JENNIFER JOHNS, CURATOR

Volunteers are the lifeline in making sure we succeed in giving quality tours and programs. As we begin the 2020 season, we are still in need of more volunteers. Docents to lead guided tours are the most sought after, but Ruthmere has other volunteer opportunities. With the expansion of our teas and other outreach programs, we also need volunteers to help assist with those programs. It can come in the form of serving food or just being an extra pair of helping hands. Or is working outdoors more what you have in mind? We have two beautiful houses with grounds that need tending. Why not become a garden volunteer?

Ruthmere has partnered with Acts of Service which is a community service hub operated by the Community Foundation of Elkhart County. Acts of Service connects local volunteers with community service opportunities. Nonprofits share their current volunteer needs and Acts of Service volunteers sign up to fill those needs. If you are interested in volunteering or know someone that would be, please have them contact Jennifer Johns, [jjohns@ruthmere.org](mailto:jjohns@ruthmere.org) or 544-264-0330 ext. 104.





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*Ruthmere*

THE RUTHMERE FOUNDATION,  
INC.  
302 EAST BEARDSLEY AVENUE  
ELKHART, INDIANA 46514  
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Organization  
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Goshen, IN 46526

While there have been no confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus in Elkhart County, Ruthmere's immediate objective is to help slow the spread of the disease. For the health and safety of visitors, volunteers, and staff, the Ruthmere Museum Campus is suspending any and all public events through May 11th. In addition, we will not be open for public tours for the 2020 season until May 12th. This decision was made in consideration of the recommendation made by the CDC to suspend any gatherings of 50 or more people for the next 8 weeks, beginning on March 15th. We will continue to send out updates regarding postponed events or changes. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Executive Director Bill Firstenberger at (574) 264-0330 (ext. 105) or [bfirstenberger@ruthmere.org](mailto:bfirstenberger@ruthmere.org)

## SOLD! RUTHMERE'S 2020 BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Reserve your seats now! This is your chance to join friends, members and supporters of Ruthmere to celebrate the transformative 2019 auction sale of the Rodin Fallen Caryatid. We will discuss the motivation that led to this watershed decision, collectively hold our breath as we re-live the four and half minutes of the Sotheby's sale, and share Ruthmere's plan and vision for this new resource.

The keynote address will be delivered by Christy Williams Coombs, Vice President of Museum Services at Sotheby's. Christy was a key member of the Sotheby's team who guided the Ruthmere sale from start to finish. She has worked for Sotheby's for the past 15 years with ever-increasing roles of responsibility, brokering sales with clients such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts and The Museum of Modern Art. Read more about Ms. Coombs when you register online at [Ruthmere.org](http://Ruthmere.org) for your reserved seats.

All Ruthmere stakeholders are invited to attend the complimentary 2020 Ruthmere Breakfast of Champions on Thursday, April 16th, 8am at the Lerner Crystal Ballroom. Light breakfast will be served and reservations are required. Financial solicitation will occur at the breakfast and by follow up from Ruthmere representatives. To book by phone, call Bill Firstenberger at 574-264-0330 ext. 105.

**Sotheby's** EST. 1744