

## A History of the Henderson Civic Symphony / Henderson Symphony Orchestra

In 1987, Mr. Frank Irvin, the orchestra teacher at Basic High School, visited Flagstaff and was impressed with their civic symphony. He thought it would be great to have a similar group in Henderson. His primary idea was to have a place for his students to continue playing their instruments after they graduated from the public school system. He talked to several people, trying to drum up interest, and did several interviews with Deborah Campbell of KVVU, Channel 5 in Henderson. He also talked to Mr. Jerry Brown, Assistant Director of Henderson Parks and Recreation. Mr. Brown agreed to place an ad in the Henderson Home News and also said they would list any performances of such a group in their publications. The ad simply said, "Anyone interested in forming an orchestra come to Parks and Recreation", and gave the date, time and place. The ad also said Frank Irvin would be the conductor. At the first gathering, on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1987, four people showed up, two violinists, a flutist, and a drummer with her snare drum. We met in a very small room at the old Civic Center recreation complex at Lead and Basic Streets, which also was the room that served as the small Department of Motor Vehicles office for Henderson. Frank Irvin brought some borrowed music. We muddled through Mozart with a snare drum beat and then talked about the possibility of forming a community orchestra.

We all agreed to meet again in a week, but on the second meeting, we were down to three people. The drummer never came back. However, by the third week, word spread and we gained several musicians from Henderson and Boulder City. This was the beginnings of what was to become the Henderson Civic Symphony.

Two current members date back to those earliest rehearsals. Dr. Sheila Sovocool, a Henderson resident, was one of the violinists at the very first rehearsal and Eleanor Beckert, a cellist from Boulder City, joined at the third rehearsal. We soon outgrew the small room and moved our rehearsals to the band room at Basic High School where we also had access to the percussion instruments at the school. Most of our music was borrowed from the school or other orchestras. However, Frank did eventually ask if Henderson Parks and Recreation could pay for some of the music. Sheila remembers sitting on the floor of the band room office pouring over music catalogs, trying to figure out what we could play with the few instruments that we had. She also served as music librarian in those early days and kept a roster of membership names and addresses. Eleanor remembers having two stands, one with the cello part and the other with bassoon. She covered both parts as best she could since we had no bassoon player. In those early days of the orchestra, Parks and Recreation had only a limited roll, in that they did pay for a few pieces of music, listed our concerts, and allowed us to perform at their facility.

Our first attempt to perform was outdoors at what was then known as Henderson's Industrial Days celebration in April of 1987. We set up with our own personal small metal stands on the grass between booths. The ground was damp and Eleanor's cello stem sunk into the ground. It was breezy and we had to keep one foot on the stands to keep them from blowing away. At that time, we were primarily a string chamber group plus a flute. We played some light music, but then attempted a Corelli Concerto Grosso. It fell apart half way through the piece but we had great fun doing it.

Our first full concert was May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1987, at the small theater in Basic High School. We performed Mozart's Symphony No. 42 and several other shorter pieces. The

orchestra members outnumbered the people in the audience. Our first concertmaster was Bill Hall, chief electrician at Hoover Dam and excellent violinist. Despite our small audience of about 10 people, mostly our own family members, we all thought the concert was a great success. We rehearsed all through that summer and played several more concerts, either at Basic High School or at the Civic Center recreation complex. Alice Shanahan, a violinist in the orchestra wrote program notes for those early concerts.

After about one year, Frank Irvin left the group, saying, "If you want to keep this going, it's up to you, the members." An orchestra member who played the French horn, JoAnne White, took over as conductor. At that time we played music mostly from movies and musicals. For several months, we struggled with decreasing membership. Were it not for a very few dedicated members that kept it going, the orchestra would have disbanded. However, JoAnne White started working more closely with Parks and Recreation and the group got back on track. In fact, the orchestra received the Nevada Recreation and Parks Society Program Excellence Award.

In 1991, Henderson Parks and Recreation really embraced the orchestra as a part of their cultural arts program and provided a budget for the orchestra. Under the direction of Dundee Jones, director of Parks and Recreation, and Sue Francesconi, staff member, Mr. David Smith was hired as conductor, the first conductor to be paid under contract with Henderson Parks and Recreation.

As the orchestra grew and our audience increased, we moved our concerts to the cafeteria at Basic, and then to the gymnasium. Over the years, we have also performed at Gibson Library, Silver Springs Recreation Center, Boulevard, Meadows, and Galleria Malls, the Activity Center at Sun City Summerlin, and the Henderson Senior Center. We also performed at the Fashion Show Mall for the grand reopening of Saks Fifth Avenue in the early 1990's. Our home performance venue for concerts since 1993 has been the Valley View Recreation Center. In 2003, we began performing our fall and spring concerts at The Pavilion at Liberty Point. The orchestra has also had a tradition of playing at the Boulder City Art Guild's Art Fair each April. Summer outdoor concerts have been performed at several Henderson Parks and in downtown Henderson. We also perform each year at the City of Henderson Veteran's Day observance and Henderson's Winterfest. For about 12 years, the orchestra also provided music for the Henderson Employees Christmas Party and the 4th of July celebration at Morrell Park. Both of those performances were discontinued after 2003.

The orchestra started giving annual holiday concerts in 1993. In 1994, several area high school choirs joined the orchestra in this concert and this has become a yearly event. In the early years, the choirs were conducted by Marcia MacCagno-Neel, but in more recent years, each school's choir director conducts one of the selections.

In 1995, the Young Artists Concert was started by conductor Mark Laycock. Talented students from grades 5 through 12 are given a chance to audition with a prepared solo, usually a movement from a concerto. Six or seven are chosen to perform with the orchestra. This concert has become an audience favorite.

The orchestra has had seven conductors during its 20 year existence:

1987-1988 Frank Irvin- Basic High School orchestra teacher  
(First had the idea of a community orchestra)

- 1988-1990 JoAnn White- French Horn player with the orchestra
- 1991-1992 David Smith- Cannon Middle School teacher  
( During Mr. Smith's tenure, principal flutist, Linda Davis did much of the conducting during rehearsals)
- 1992-1997 Mark Laycock- Las Vegas High School Orchestra teacher  
(Mr. Laycock was innovative, with boundless energy and organizational skills. He improved the orchestra to a new level.)
- 1997 Dr. Glenn Cooper- Clark County School District Director of Magnet Schools  
(Served as an interim conductor.)
- 1997-2002 Brad Pfeil- Las Vegas High School Orchestra teacher  
(Mr. Pfeil's great dedication and many contacts with the musical community brought in new members, further improving the orchestra.)
- 2002-present Peter Aaronson- past conductor of numerous groups, currently runs a sound systems business  
Asst. conductor-Mike Gjurich  
(Mr. Aaronson's extensive training as a conductor, his passion for music, and his belief in the ability of the musicians has brought the orchestra to a new level.)

The orchestra has also been conducted by orchestra members, Carol Johnson and Sherrie Parker, who frequently filled in whenever needed.

We have had several guest conductors for specific pieces or for specific summer concerts.

Dr. Arthur C. Bartner, Conductor of the USC Marching Band, was a former teacher of Mark Laycock. Mr. Laycock invited Dr. Bartner to come and conduct on several occasions.

Charles Cushionary and Charles Jackson have conducted summer concerts.

Karl Reinarz has conducted the orchestra on several occasions, the most memorable being the wedding of then maestro Mark Laycock to Suzanne Simon at Prince of Peace Catholic Church. The whole orchestra provided all the music at the wedding.

Current conductor Peter Aaronson was guest conductor twice prior to becoming regular conductor.

The position of orchestra manager started under Mark Laycock in 1996. Up to that point, Mr. Laycock had been doing all the managing duties as well as conducting. With increasing membership and number of performances, it became too time consuming. He asked flutist Sherrie Parker if she would become the orchestra manager. With a manager in place, the orchestra became a much more organized group. Music

was ordered on time for rehearsals, membership and mailing lists were computerized, and all the many details of putting on a performance were expertly carried out. The performances of the orchestra took on a much more professional appearance. Sherrie Parker served as manager from 1996 to 2005. Oboe player Molly Murphy took over as manager in the fall of 2005.

The orchestra has had an impressive list of soloists. The following list includes mainly regular season concert soloists. It does not include the many young artists who have performed with the orchestra, nor does it include summer concert soloists. We apologize for any omissions to this list.

- 5-3-'92 Thomas Flagg – Sonata for Trumpet and Strings – Purcell  
 3-13-'93 Linda Davis – Fantasia for Flute and Chamber Orchestra - Faure  
 5-17-'93 Paul Kreider, baritone – Old American Songs -Copeland  
 5-15-'94 Jolene Armstrong, violinist – Concerto No.2 in D minor, op22 –Wieniawski  
 10-16-'94 Samuel Scott – Concerto in C major for Violincello and Orchestra –Haydn  
 2-26-'95 Patrick Bowen – Concerto for Percussion and Chamber Orchestra – Milhaud  
 4-30-'95 Glenn Cooper – Concierto de Aranjuez for Guitar and Orchestra – Rodrigo  
 5-20-'95 Green Valley High School Madrigals and Concert Choir  
 10-29-'95 Walter Blanton, trumpet – Suite in D major – Jeremiah Clarke  
 2-11-'96 Douglas Wilson – Concerto for Organ in B flat, op.7, no.3 –Handel  
 (performed at Community Lutheran Church)  
 4-28-'96 Yunah Lee, soprano – several arias from operas  
 11-26-'96 Shakeh Ghoukasian, violin – “Winter” from The Four Seasons - Vivaldi  
 2-23-'97 Beth Lano – Concerto No.3 in E flat for horn and orchestra, K447 – Mozart  
 4-27-'97 Alan Lawson – clarinet medley of jazz  
 10-19-'97 Nathan Tannenbaum, narrator – “Lincoln Portrait” – Copeland  
 3-15-98 Teresa Ling, violin and Scott Rawls, viola – Sinfonia Concertante – Mozart  
 Bruce Holloway, cello – Kol Nidrei – Bruch  
 Sherrie Parker and Julie Williams, flutes – Brandenburg Concerto No.4 –Bach  
 4-26-98 Las Vegas Mastersingers – Rossini, Brahms, and Vaughan Williams  
 10-18-'98 Andrew Smith – Elegie for Cello and Orchestra – Faure  
 3-21-'99 Eric Fleischer, tenor and Deborah Muhlenbrook, soprano  
 2-6-2000 Wayne Raney – Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra – Arutunian  
 5-21-'00 William Sovich, piano – Concerto No.2 – Shostakovich  
 7-17-'00 Caryn Wunderlich Gott and Michelle Gott, electric harp– Sweet Georgia Brown  
 4-'01 Randy Pagel and White Middle School Choristers – “Gloria” – Vivaldi  
 5-20-'01 Sherrie Parker – Poem for Flute and Orchestra – Charles Griffes  
 5-20-'01 Yvonne Betron – Romance for Oboe and Orchestra – Richard McGee  
 2-11-'02 Brad Pfeil, double bass – “Carmen Fantasy” – Bizet  
 5-19-'02 Brian Hicks, piano – “Rhapsody in Blue” – Gershwin  
 10-6-'02 Bill Parker, clarinet – Concerto No.2, Op74 in E flat major – VonWeber  
 2-9-'03 Barbara Edwards – Concerto in G Major for Viola – Telemann  
 5-18-'03 Las Vegas Mastersingers, Hallie Neill, soprano, Theodore Lambrines, baritone -  
 Requiem Op.48 – Faure

**Conductors:****Frank Irvin (1987-1988)**

May 24, 1987, Theater at Basic High School  
 Performed 3 to 4 concerts at Basic High School and Civic Center Recreation Center.

**JoAnne White (1988-1990)**

Dec. 12, 1989, Seasonal Classics  
 Feb. 13, 1990, Songs of the Heart  
 March 17, 1990, Irish Favorites at Gibson Library  
 April 22, 1990, Selections for Spring at Gibson Library  
 May 20, 1990, Memorial Concert at Silver Springs Recreation Center  
 Oct. 20, 1990, Sweetest Day Concert at Gibson Library  
 Dec. 7, 1990, Holiday Concert at Henderson Senior Center  
 Dec. 11, 1990, Holiday Concert at Meadows Mall  
 Feb. 29, 1991, Classical Concert at Gibson Library

**David Smith (1991-1992) Concerts were done with the Musician's Union, 45 members**

Spring concert 1991 ??  
 May 5, 1991, Mother's Day Concert at Silver Springs Recreation Center  
 Oct. 19, 1991, Concert Performance at Greenspun Jr. High  
 Dec. 14, 1991, Holiday Concert at Henderson Senior Center  
 March 1, 1992, Concert performance at Silver Springs Recreation Center  
 May 3, 1992, Concert performance at Silver Springs Recreation Center

**Mark Laycock (1992-1997): added Sounds of the Season and Young Artists Concerts**

Oct. 17, 1992, Concert Performance at Basic High School Theater  
 Dec. 1992  
 Feb. 1993  
 March 13, 1993, Performance at Basic High School Activity/ Cafeteria Room  
 May 23, 1993, Concert Performance at Valley View Recreation Center  
 Oct. 17, 1993, Concert Performance at Valley View Rec. Center  
 Dec. 7, 1993, Concert Performance at Valley View Rec. Center  
 Dec. 21, 1993, Concert Performance at Boulevard Mall  
 March 6, 1994, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 15, 1994, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Oct. 16, 1994, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Dec. 1994, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Feb. 26, 1995, Valley View Rec. Center  
 April 30, 1995, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 20, 1995, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Oct. 29, 1995, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Feb 11, 1996, Community Lutheran Church  
 April 28, 1996, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Oct. 15, 1996, Valley View Rec. Center, guest conductor-Glenn Cooper

Nov.26, 1996, Concert at Sun City Summerlin Activity Center  
 Feb. 23, 1997, Valley View Rec. Center  
 April 27, 1997, Valley View Rec. Center  
 July 18, 1997, Twilight Series at Civic Center Plaza  
 August 1, 1997, Twilight Series at Civic Center Plaza

**Dr. Glenn Cooper (1997-1998)**

Oct. 19, 1997, Concert Performance at Valley View Recreation Center  
 Dec. 9, 1997, Sounds of the Season at Valley View Recreation Center  
 Winter 1998

**Brad Pfeil (1998-2002)**

March 15, 1998, Concert Performance at Valley View Recreation Center  
 April 26, 1998, Concert Performance at Valley View Recreation Center  
 June 7, 1998, Young Artist's Concert at Valley View Recreation Center  
 July 17, 1998, Twilight Series at Civic Center Plaza  
 July 31, 1998, Twilight Series at Civic Center Plaza  
 Oct. 18, 1998, French Impressions at Valley View Recreation Center  
 Dec.8, 1998, Sounds of the Season at Valley View Recreation Center  
 March 21, 1999, Spring Concert at Valley View Recreation Center  
 April 25, 1999, Young Artists Concert at Valley View Recreation Center  
 May 23, 1999, Season Finale at Valley View Recreation Center  
 May 29, 1999, Memorial Day Celebration at Civic Center Plaza  
 Oct. 24, 1999, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Dec. 7, 1999, Sounds of the Season, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Feb. 6, 2000, Shakespeare in Concert, Valley View Rec. Center  
 March 12, 2000, Young Artists Concert, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 21, 2000, Season Finale, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 27, 2000, Memorial Day Concert at City Memorial Wall  
 June 17, 2000, Concert Performance at Sonata Park in Seven Hills area  
 July 17, 2000, Concert at Justice Center  
 Oct. 22, 2000, Haunting Melodies, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Nov. 2000, Veterans Day Ceremony  
 Dec. 5, 2000, Sounds of the Season, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Feb. 11, 2001, Classical Masterpieces, Valley View Rec. Center  
 March 11, 2001, Young Artists Concert, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 20, 2001, Season Finale, Valley View Rec. Center  
 June, 2001, Music Under the Stars at Civic Center Plaza  
 Oct. 2, 2001, Season Opener at Valley View Rec. Center  
 Nov. 2001, Veterans Day Ceremony  
 Dec. 4, 2001, Sounds of the Season, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Feb. 11, 2002, Valley View Rec. Center  
 March 10, 2002, Young Artists Concert, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 19, 2002, Season Finale, Valley View Rec. Center  
 June 7, 2002, Twilight Under the Stars, Civic Center Plaza

**Peter Aaronson (2002-present)**

Oct. 6, 2002, Season Premiere, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Nov. 2002, Veterans Day Ceremony  
 Dec. 3, 2002, Sounds of the Season, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Feb. 9, 2003, Valley View Rec. Center  
 March 16, 2003, Young Artists Concert, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 18, 2003, Season Finale, Valley View Rec. Center  
 June 6, 2003, Music Under the Stars, Justice Court Park  
 Oct. 18, 2003, Season Opener at Henderson Pavilion  
 Nov. 2003, Veterans Day Ceremony  
 Dec. 2, 2003, Sounds of the Season, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Feb. 8, 2004, Musical Innovations at Valley View Rec. Center  
 March 28, 2004, Young Artists Concert, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 16, 2004, Season Finale, Valley View Rec. Center  
 June 11, 2004, Music Under the Stars, Justice Court Park  
 Oct. 2, 2004, Season Opener, Henderson Pavilion  
 Nov. 2004, Veterans Day Ceremony  
 Nov. 30, 2004, Sounds of the Season, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Dec., 2004, Henderson Winterfest at Henderson Pavilion  
 Feb. 6, 2005, Symphonic Romance, Valley View Rec. Center  
 March 20, 2005, Young Artists Concert  
 May 22, 2005, Season Finale, Henderson Pavilion  
 June 3, 2005, Music Under the Stars, Justice Court Park  
 Oct. 8, 2005, Fall Into Classics, Henderson Pavilion  
 Nov. 5, 2005, Veterans Day Ceremony, Henderson Memorial Wall  
 Dec. 6, 2005, Sounds of the Season, Valley View Rec. Center  
 Dec. 12, 2005, Henderson Winterfest at Henderson Pavilion  
 Feb. 5, 2006, From the Heart, Valley View Rec. Center  
 March 26, 2006, Young Artists Concert, Valley View Rec. Center  
 May 20, 2006, Season Finale, Henderson Pavilion  
 June 2, 2006, Music Under the Stars, Justice Court Park

In addition to these concerts, the orchestra has played at several venues that were not a part of the official Parks and Recreation schedule. Each April, the orchestra plays at the Boulder City Art Guild Art Show and they have contributed generously to our group. We have also played at Monte Lago Village at Lake Las Vegas. In Nov., 2003, we provided the music for the first graduation ceremony for the School of Pharmacy, held at the Henderson Pavilion.

The above history of the Henderson Civic Symphony was written by Dr. Sheila Sovocool in 2006. Resources for this history include records from the Parks and Recreation Cultural Arts Department, past programs, and recollections of several longtime members and from the first conductor, Mr. Frank Irvin. Thank you to long time members Eleanor Beckert, Carol Johnson, Nancy Palmer and Dr. John Watkins, and former members

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