

Noonday Concert Series resumes as Zoom event

By Dean Geddes

dgeddes@inkym.com The Noonday Concert Series has been a staple at Nantucket's Unitarian Meeting House for the last four decades, as performers have played brief half-hour concerts at the Orange Street church each summer.

The series was the brainchild of the Unitarian Universalist Church's former music director, Susie Jarrell.

But this year, because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the concert series is taking place virtually, with prerecorded shows from four different performers broadcast over the next month and a half on Zoom.

"I think the original idea is that people could come during their lunch

break, eat their sandwich and listen to a concert for a half hour," said Barbara Elder, the church's former music director.

"We didn't want to break the tradition. Music is a very important part of our church. We celebrate a lot of our spiritual beliefs during our church services through music."

While the feel of an in-person concert can't be replicated online, there are benefits to holding the series virtually, church treasurer Jeffery Thomson said.

"There are pluses and minuses with doing it online," he said. "We SERIES, PAGE 8B

"One of my main reasons for continuing the series was to give musicians a gig, to make sure artists still had some kind of an outlet."

– Nigel Goss Unitarian Church music director

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would love to be together in one room, but this is safer. And with this you get different angles and a different spatial experience. I think even when we are able to do this again in person, we will also do it virtually as well. We can get it to people who can't come to the church."

Thomson said he is reaching out to independent- and assisted-living facilities on the island and other groups with members who wouldn't have been able to attend in person, in order to broaden the audience.

Jacob Butler will perform a mix of pop of folk songs from the 1960s today at noon. Next Thursday, Isaiah Williams will perform classical and romantic works on the Unitarian Meeting House's historic Goodrich Organ. And on Thursday, Aug. 6, Nick Davies and Ivy Ringel will perform French chamber music by Francois Couperin, André Jolivet and Guillaume Connesson from their home in Indianapolis, with Davies on clarinet and Ringel on bassoon.

through Zoom teleconferencing.

"It's definitely strange for me," Goss said of playing to an empty room. "I just went in there with some sound recording equipment and took the video off my iPhone and iPad."

After the show, Goss joined the Zoom meeting for an impromptu question-and-answer session with the audience. It's another new wrinkle to the online shows that didn't happen in-person, and Thomson said he hopes it will continue with the other performances throughout the summer.

Goss was pleased with the virtual turnout for the first show. The in-person performances in recent years would draw between 10 and 40 people. While the experience of watching music live and in person is missing in this year's series, Goss thinks one silver lining might be that more people are able to tune in, who wouldn't otherwise be able to head down to the church in the middle of the busy summer season.

Nigel Goss took over as the church's music director in the fall of 2019, and was forced to adapt to keep the Noonday Concert Series going. For Goss, it was important to feature local musicians who have been unable to perform in person until recently due to COVID-19 restrictions.

"One of my main reasons for continuing the series (online) was to give musicians a gig, to make sure artists still had some kind of an outlet," Goss said.

Goss kicked off this year's series last Thursday, performing double bass renditions of Bach's "Cello Suite No. 1 in G major" in the empty main sanctuary of the Unitarian Meeting House, as 50-plus people watched

The shows are already recorded. Three of the four were shot at the church, for two reasons, Goss said: to keep the church fresh in everyone's minds and to utilize its acoustics.

"It's a really beautiful space to perform in if you're singing or playing string instruments," Goss said.

For a complete list of shows and the accompanying Zoom links, visit

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