Growing up in the 1970s north of Potsdam in Norfolk, New York, near the Canadian border, Michael Hill dreamed of becoming an astronaut. “But I found out I wasn’t that good in science,” he says, smiling. Hill is sitting comfortably in a leather chair in the Washington, D.C., condo where he has lived for much of the last 15 years. This top floor walk-up is full of natural light and features a rooftop deck that yields a dramatic view of downtown and the Washington Monument. The unassuming concrete block building in the Adams Morgan neighborhood is about a mile northeast of the neighborhood where Barack and Michelle Obama and Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump now reside.

Though Hill has already fully moved into the President’s Cottage at Chautauqua, he will keep the D.C. residence and spend about a third of his time here in the off-season. Longstanding friendships and his many professional connections will help to strengthen old and new programming partnerships that the Institution has built over the years, offering a steady presence for Chautauqua in the nation’s capital. Being a part of the national dialogue on issues of global consequence is a keen interest that led Hill to apply for the president’s job in the first place.

“I don’t believe what Chautauqua can and will do is only relegated to nine weeks a year on the grounds,” he says. “The world is yearning for a year-round exchange of ideas, what I’ve been calling ‘a muscular civil dialogue.’” He pauses. “People often asked Chautauqua’s founders Lewis Miller and John Heyl Vincent if Chautauqua was a place or a movement. For me, the answer is yes.”

Hill hopes to bring Chautauqua to greater prominence in the national conversation, growing a movement that models respectful dialogue. His long-term vision includes the possibility of institutional offices in New York City and Washington as part of being of the world, while preserving and celebrating Chautauqua’s sacred place in Western New York. Already, Hill’s second bedroom in the condo is serving as the “D.C. office,” and just this morning he’s come in on the train from New York City, where he was meeting with several longtime Chautauquans. “It’s an easy trip,” he says.

Hill’s first months on the job have mostly been on the road. Along with other Institution staff he has also been in conversation about the soon-to-be-announced 2018 season. He’s been meeting for the first time with people often asked Chautauqua’s sacred place...
“While we will enjoy the fruits of these gifts from donors during our lifetimes, we also know that Promise Campaign investors have, in effect, said ‘I am giving this beyond this space and time.’”

—Tom Becker

Sitting around the Wendt Board Room a little later in the 2016 season, the volunteer leaders of the Promise Campaign shared their perspectives on the effort, which would soon draw to a close. George Snyder, campaign co-chair and immediate past chair of the Chautauqua Board of Trustees, recalled that a few years before the launch, more than 150 Chautauquans had participated in study groups to examine various aspects of the Institution’s programming, facilities, and financials. Their recommendations went to the Institution Board for further consideration.

“The ultimate result was a comprehensive strategic plan from the Trustees that the Chautauqua Foundation Board could then turn into a great set of initiatives, marrying the strategic plan to our fundraising objectives,” Snyder said.

At the same time, Chautauquan and Trustee Ron Kilpatrick assisted the Institution in developing a model to assess the long-term capital needs for every facility on the grounds.

“That modeling of our needs for maintenance of the physical plant,” said Snyder, “is one of Ron’s great gifts and legacies, and will continue as we go forward.”

Steve Percy, campaign co-chair and former Chautauqua Foundation Board chair, also noted that: “On the fundraising side, our professional staff is so experienced and disciplined in creating teams of volunteers, giving them assignments, and managing the follow through. That was key to our success in this campaign.”

“The precedent of having outgoing board chairs head up the campaign was also very effective,” said the present chair of the Institution’s Board of Trustees, Jim Pardo. “George and Steve have done a marvelous job of pulling us from the front and pushing us from the back.”

Current Foundation board chair Cathy Bonner nodded. She is a veteran of many capital campaigns in her home state of Texas. “You can’t underestimate the power of planned giving, either,” she said. “One unrestricted bequest in the Promise Campaign represents five percent of the total amount raised. Planned giving can really make a difference!”

Snyder also pointed out that many of the major gifts in the Promise Campaign have come from new donors, which is a happy development. “These are people who have a new relationship and investment in the Institution,” he said.

“And smaller gifts are just as important,” Pardo added. “People who give as they are able—those gifts add up to major programming improvements. If you took the number of gifts of less than $500 to the Chautauqua Fund during the term of the Promise Campaign, it exceeds the total budget of the [annual 10:45 a.m.] lecture platform over that same span of six years. That’s incredible.”

“The successful completion of this campaign instills tremendous confidence in Chautauqua,” Bonner added. “That a community which gathers for nine weeks could pull off a campaign of this magnitude is impressive.”

Snyder reminded the group that Tom Becker had been a very effective fundraiser for the Promise Campaign. “He has a skill set that has been built up over 30 years—personal relationships with donors who have seen so many positive things happen here. Still, we have some important goals outstanding,” Snyder said.

The group agreed that scholarships for students in the Schools of Fine & Performing Arts and the renovation of Bellinger Hall are critical goals going forward. “Our commitment to programming in the new Amp must also demonstrate our commitment to our students,” Percy added.

Of the Amp, Becker also noted that the project was far and away the biggest he’d ever taken on. “The philanthropic response to the Amp has been extraordinary. The single gift we received of $1.5 million would only come to a mature organization that has been working on philanthropy for a long time.”

“People understood in this campaign that the return on investment would reach out over 100 years,” Becker said summing it all up. “While we will enjoy the fruits of these gifts from donors during our lifetimes, we also know that Promise Campaign investors have, in effect, said ‘I am giving this beyond this space and time.’ Our donors share the strong belief in the purpose of this place and its aspirations. They honor the effort of the Institution moving forward, year in and year out, as we try to do this work better every year. For that we can only give thanks.”
A Climate of Generosity

FROM THE CEO

Geof Follansbee

The final report of the Promise Campaign has been issued, and we are already witnessing the power of philanthropy in action. The Amphitheater project—which as I write, has enjoyed a run of unusually warm weather—will be the most visible manifestation in the coming season of Chautauquans’ record-setting generosity. But the Promise Campaign also provides us with a new sense of the Institution as a financially mature organization—an organization that is stable, strong, and worthy of the largest number and size of leadership gifts ever contributed in a capital campaign at Chautauqua.

Those of you who serve on boards and fundraising committees back home know from experience that it takes an organization time to get to this point, unless the organization was founded by extraordinary philanthropy from a single person or source. Nonprofit organizations have to perform and build trust over time. They must earn the confidence of donors that philanthropic investments will be managed with discipline and diligence so that the intended impact of a gift is fully realized.

Chautauqua’s staff strive to advance the organizational maturity of this Institution, but it is the extraordinary commitment, acumen, and intelligence of trustees, directors, and the diligent work of willing volunteers—year after year—that has created this climate of generosity. Yes, many of those who contributed to the Promise Campaign have been loyal contributors for years, but so many stepped up their giving to new levels. And Chautauqua has been the recipient of many new gifts from individuals and families who contributed for the first time.

We have been hugely successful in funding our operations over the past six years through the Chautauqua Fund, while also enabling program initiatives that help us to think about Chautauqua’s programming in a different way—improving efficiency, building audiences, establishing partnerships, cultivating relationships with presenters, and becoming more reflective of our nation’s demography. At the same time, we have improved our facilities in ways that will have an impact for decades.

Chautauqua now stands at a pivot point—the pivot for which we have been aiming. In planning for previous campaigns, we used to stand at the Main Gate and look inside, program by program, building by building, and ask ourselves, “What are our strategic goals?” Now, we are metaphorically standing at the Main Gate and looking outward. We find ourselves with energetic new leadership that asks: How does Chautauqua play a much larger role in national conversations? How do we have a year-round presence in the world’s critical dialogue? Who else can we partner with to better position us for this important work?

We find ourselves with reinvigorated with respect and civility, as well as our thoughtful investment in youth programs that have an impact on the greater county and region where we live. We also take a look at the international expansion in our Piano Program; a new program that invites Chautauqua County youth to Boys’ and Girls’ Club; a 2017 inter-arts initiative that is already committed to travel beyond the gates; and a scholarship that encourages greater racial diversity among our community of young artists.

At Chautauqua we are now entering a period of reflection on precisely how we expand this work to reach new participants, build new partnerships, create new interdisciplinary expressions on the issues of the day, and better deploy technology in service to our vision.

For our part, the Chautauqua Foundation will attend to the management of the resources with which we’ve been entrusted. We will ensure that the generosity of Chautauquans is rewarded through our disciplined investments. We will make certain that specific endowments are true to the donors’ wishes.

This is also a period to listen, to engage the community in this discussion of what’s next. Chautauquans will be asked to join in the planning process for additional strategic investments. We invite you to participate in a continuing and wider engagement with leadership, volunteers, and staff.

At this point in time, we also recognize that our Chautauqua Fund is more important than ever to underwriting the Institution’s annual operations, and we must continue to grow the Fund at a level greater than inflation, while also adding to the endowment each and every year. Even with the generous gains we’ve made in endowment during the course of the Promise Campaign, it deserves additional investment befitting an organization of this size, complexity, and ambitious vision. And our facilities, gardens, and shared spaces will always require our vigilance and care.

Ultimately, I believe that as Chautauqua’s reputation grows—as more and more people across the country see us as a resource, making important contributions to the national discussion—we will, in turn, see new and additional philanthropic resources opening up to us. It is an exciting time to be a Chautauquan…. I welcome your thoughts, and thank you for bringing us to this exciting precipice.
The first of these jobs came early, when Hill was still in his 20s and working at the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at his alma mater, St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, N.Y. The university had fallen on hard times when Hill was an undergraduate, but it had a new arts and cultural center in need of visioning and a chance to be a renaissance for the campus. “I didn’t really know there was such a thing as a career in arts management,” he says. But one day in the center he had a revelation. “I was coming down the stairs of the center’s atrium, which hugged the outer theater wall. That night the Buffalo Philharmonic was giving a concert. I could feel them rehearsing through the walls, and it dawned on me, that working in the arts might be a pretty good thing. I could do that.” He soon applied to graduate school in arts and cultural management at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota. Degree in hand, he returned to direct the Quick Center at St. Bonaventure from 1997 to 2002. Hill oversaw construction of a new museum complex, managed the renovation of the school’s historic theater, and added an artist residency center while the programming mushroomed. Today he is a trustee of St. Bonaventure, as well as a member of the advisory board for its Russell J. Jandoli School of Communications.

**Turnaround Agent**

In the first two decades of his professional life, Hill often found himself in positions that required him to become a turnaround agent for organizations in turmoil or in need of a paradigm shift. "It’s a gift to come into an organization that’s so strong after 13 years of the visionary leadership of Tom Becker.” —Michael Hill

**Voice and Brass**

From an early age, music was a big part of Hill’s life. With his astronaut fantasies set aside, Hill launched into music lessons and also took up writing as means of expression. Growing up near the distinguished Crane School of Music in Potsdam, he had access to “amazing student teachers” at his school and professional voice and instrument lessons. Developing his singing voice and the discipline of the trombone, Hill performed adaptations of jazz and popular music in various trombone ensembles and sang in choirs and ensembles. He also got his first paying job as a journalist at age 13, writing for a daily newspaper in nearby Massena.

It seemed sensible at the time to major in journalism when he got to St. Bonaventure. It was during this period that Hill visited Chautauqua for the first time, ending up as a copy/assistant editor for the Daily the summer following graduation. From 1997 to 2001, he would return to the grounds on occasion as a music and theater critic for the Daily, staying for a day or two at a time at the Wensley House and attending symphony concerts and plays. After a Dow Jones Newspaper Fund Fellowship at the Richmond Times Dispatch, Hill recognized, with a little coaching from a seasoned staffer, that the field of newspaper journalism was changing and not in a way favorable to writers.

Following his early success at the Quick Center, Hill was ready for a bigger challenge and a bigger city. He took a job in Washington, D.C., in 2002. Hill was hired as deputy campaign manager for the historic Arena Stage in Washington, then at the beginning of an ambitious capital campaign. After three months on the job, Hill found out that his boss had been fired. The learning curve was steep but Hill moved into the lead role and directed the campaign, raising some $125 million and securing the largest philanthropic gift ever received by a U.S. theater.

Shortly after arriving in the nation’s capital, while still learning the ropes at Arena, Hill told a friend from the National Endowment for the Arts that he was missing life on a university campus. Suffering from “Adult A.D.D.” as his mother, Patricia, calls it, Hill applied in 2003 to teach the first marketing course at George Mason University in a new master’s in arts management program, thanks to the recommendation of his NEA friend, all while retaining his role at Arena. Hill has since taught a range of graduate courses over his 15-year tenure at GMU as an adjunct, and has been invited to lecture on non-profit management at George Washington University, Georgetown, and a number of other venues around the globe. By his own admission he is also “a huge consumer of the arts in D.C.” He loves the “pulse and activity” of the city.

After his work for Arena Stage, Hill then became executive director for external relations at Washington National Cathedral, where he was called upon to revitalize the development and communications functions during a time of serious economic retrenchment. “Cathedral Dean Sam Lloyd was staring a movement that he called ‘generous spirited Christianity,’” Hill explains. “He issued a Chautauqua-like welcome to all faiths and those of no faith to join in the Cathedral community.” Hill, who was raised Catholic, was warmly embraced by the Episcopal institution.
The Hill Profile:

We asked Chautauqua’s new president, Michael Hill, to share some of his favorite things.

**Artwork:**
Canova’s “Cupid and Psyche,” but that may be because it also means I’m in Paris if I’m viewing it.

**Symphony:**
Henrik Gorecki’s Symphony No. 3

**Jazz Artist:**
Jane Monheit

**Play:**
Sarah Ruhl’s Passion Play, although my first love is musical theater, and I presently cannot stop playing the soundtrack from Dear Evan Hansen.

**Book:**
Dear Evan Hansen, although I’ve read is usually my favorite.

**Ballet:**
Edwaard Liang’s Wunderland

**Boo:**
Cannot pick one book. The last one I’ve read is usually my favorite.

And finally, a favorite Chautauqua moment to date: So many! Walking into the board room after being elected as the President, meeting my staff for the first time, my recent “read trip” across the country to meet Chautauquans, the quiet and not so quiet moments at the President’s Cottage, and the daily interactions with Chautauquans walking across the grounds.

After recrafting their communications and downsizing staff at the cathedral, including eliminating his own position, Hill applied to become executive director of the Washington Ballet. One of two top candidates, Hill came in second, but was promptly contacted by the new executive director to become the Ballet’s director of external relations, an 18-month turnaround assignment.

Next, the CEO of United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) came calling. Stephen Bennett, with whom Hill had served on the Board of Directors of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington, asked him to conduct a management study for UCP. “He told me the organization’s external communications were fragmented and sloshed,” Hill explains.

Hill conducted the study, presented his findings, and then Bennett told him he wanted him on staff to execute the recommendations from his report. Hill found himself especially drawn to the organization because Bennett had talked to him very persuasively about how people with disabilities represented the last great civil rights movement in this country.

“We don’t just pass the Americans with Disabilities Act and we’re done,” Hill says. “There are so many challenges still remaining in our society today for people with disabilities.”

Remembering the difficulties of an uncle with disabilities who lived with his grandmother for most of his life, Hill found a new spark in the work. Meanwhile, Bennett became an important mentor who eventually coached him to pursue a role as a President. That exploration led to Youth For Understanding, USA—the organization where Hill had been president and CEO for the last four years.

YFU was in need of rebranding, restructuring, and greater fiscal discipline. Though he’d had no experience in student exchange programs, Hill brought a fresh perspective on how the organization might expand to serve young people with a transformative experience in intercultural exchange, and created new program models, including one emphasizing virtual connections instead of costly travel. In addition to hosting his own exchange student, Hill had just launched the beginning phase of virtual exchanges between students in this country and youth in the Middle East and North Africa.

Then he found out that Tom Becker was retiring—a surprise he didn’t expect so soon.

Putting It All Together

Leading Chautauqua is Hill’s dream job. “This is the one place where everything I have ever done or been interested in is in one spot. Working at Youth For Understanding only heightened my desire to explore conversations across cultural and other differences.”

With all the challenges of being a young person in a fractious global society at the top of his list, Hill brings a strong commitment to the examination and enhancement of the Institution’s programming for young people and families. “Many Chautauquans are rightly expressing a desire and need that we modernize our programs for children,” he says. “Young people have changed, expectations have changed, how parents and kids talk to each other has changed, and we must address these issues. Families are coming to Chautauqua for shorter stays. I don’t know all the answers to this, but we must preserve the vitality of our multigenerational community, which is such a strength.”

Hill is also glad to be coming to Chautauqua since his mother, who has had some health issues, is now living in nearby Olean. Hill’s father passed away three years ago. “Now, I will be able to check in on her more easily spend time with her,” he says.

Hill knows the task ahead is mighty. “I have felt incredibly welcomed, and people have really tried to help me decode a place that they love so deeply.” He’s also been warned that Chautauquans are passionate people with strong opinions on many topics that they love to share at length. “I know I need a bicycle,” he laughs, noting the advice that some of the trustees gave him if he wanted to get across the grounds in a timely manner. “I don’t really have a sense of the pace and what it’s like in those nine weeks of the season.”

Hill is open minded, willing to test his assumptions, and authentically humble in his approach.

Ultimately, Hill brings fresh eyes to the Institution and extraordinary experience across a range of kindred nonprofit organizations. He says that, for now, the fundamental questions as he learns the Institution’s practices are: “Why are we doing this? To what end? Are we moving the needle in society and adding something to the conversation? Is this idea or theme actionable?” The answers will unfold with his first season, ushering in a new Chautauqua era.

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STEPPING INTO THE AMPHITHEATER

Every workday morning this year, Chautauqua’s director of operations, John Shedd, starts his day on the Amphitheater construction site. Rain, snow or sunshine, there are a million details to follow, and as of the time of publication, the project is on schedule. As Chautauquans winters go, this one was pretty cooperative for the work crews. Their tasks should be complete on everything needed in the facility to launch the 2017 season, which will begin with a ceremonial dedication of this sacred space renewed, and then foreshadowed by guests of the Institution before opening of the former Amp, then the official opening of the Amp on June 29. There will also be a special arts marquee celebrating the opening of the Amp on Sunday, July 2.

Another inter-arts project, now two years in the making, will combine literary arts and music into a staged work about the immigrant experience. The piece, commissioned by Chautauqua, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, and the Princeton University Symphony, where CSO conductor Rossen Milanov is also music director, is based on the novel and 2017 CLSC selection, The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros. Chautauqua’s partnership with National Geographic will take advantage of the technological enhancements in the new Amp in Week Two, while the National Comedy Center helps bring a variety of new voices to the stage in Week Six.

Chautauqua’s Director of the Department of Religion, the Rev. Dr. Robert Franklin will open the 2017 season by honoring the historic religious traditions that have been celebrated at Chautauqua. “We want to lift up the diverse voices and traditions that will find a home in the Amp going forward. It will be a very special interfaith moment for the Chautauqua community,” Franklin concluded.

Top L-R: Looking towards the stage from the north west side. Backstage, stage flooring from the previous Amp will be re-purposed as flooring in the Jean and Charles Goodell Room.

Photography: Chautauqua Institution
Building Bridges in the County: NEW CLUB SCHOLARSHIP FOR LOCAL YOUTH

As a youngster, Jenny Beeson followed a traditional path at Chautauqua. She and her family stayed through the summer and she attended Children’s School, then Club, and eventually became a Club counselor. She worked at the Amphitheater and at the advertising office of The Chautauquan Daily. Back then in the 1980s, the newspaper was still mocked-up by hand. Jenny says she can still remember the smell of the wax used to paste down the pages.

Today, Jenny Beeson Gregory is a photo editor for The Washington Post where she has worked since 1998. And, she’s still a devoted Chautauquan who has recently created a scholarship for local youth to experience a week enrolled at Boys’ and Girls’ Club.

After a conversation with a friend who grew up in nearby Lakewood, N.Y., Jenny realized that she wanted to help break down the “town and gown” divide that exists. This circumstance only confirms that some area students experience if they’ve never set foot inside the gates of the Institution. Matt Ewalt, associate director of Education and Youth Services, has worked to execute Jenny’s vision, launching the scholarship as an investment over time. “The Club experience is something every child can benefit from,” he says. “It’s a huge asset, and one of the best things we offer on the grounds. Club is one of the best summer experiences for youth in Western New York.”

The first recipient of the scholarship attended this past season—a girl named Maddison from Jamestown. Maddison was comfortable exploring on her own during the lunch breaks and her adventures included a special trip to the Archives because of her interest in history. “The staff who got to know Maddison had a lot of good things to say about her,” Jenny says. “She sounded like a quiet, bright girl who would enjoy a little fun and the many activities available at Club. I think it also takes a lot of self-assurance at that age to get lunch and get back on time to Club. It seems like she had a very positive experience. It’s important to consider a student’s interests and needs to ensure they have the most fulfilling experience possible.”

Matt Ewalt witnessed Maddison’s delight in the program first-hand. “I was walking along the waterfront at Club one day, and I saw Maddison with a group of new friends. She waved at me, and I pulled her aside to talk for a moment. The huge smile on her face said everything.”

Ewalt, who lives in Chautauqua County year-round and is raising a family here, believes strongly in the power of this scholarship. “How we welcome and embrace families throughout the region is critical,” he says, “and as Chautauquans, we benefit from building these connections. It creates a greater sense of community and context for Chautauquans who live elsewhere during the rest of the year. What we hope from this experience is that Maddison will speak to others about how much fun she had at Club and all the friends she made.”

Beeson Gregory, who grew up outside Cleveland, says Club was a chance for her to learn about nature, arts, crafts, sailing, swimming, and canoeing. “I was kind of a shy kid, but I made close, lifelong friends at Club, and came out of my shell here. Club and Chautauqua as a whole have had a big impact on my life.”

She also sees the scholarship’s potential to enrich the experience for Club veterans by offering a way for them to meet more local youth, and to quietly show them the value of philanthropy at Chautauqua. “In the future, I’d love to see Club parents have the opportunity to give a little extra when they pay their child’s tuition to help more local children attend Club through this scholarship. It could help their kids understand that not everyone is fortunate enough to visit Chautauqua or attend Club.

They might also learn something about the world beyond the grounds. Starting the scholarship is my way of trying to make a difference in a small way and to give back to Chautauqua,” she says.

Making Connections

Says Ewalt: “Jenny’s gift is also a call to action for the rest of us to think about how we work with other youth organizations in the county.” Already, other initiatives are blossoming. Ewalt referenced the Institution’s work in arts education within Chautauqua County schools, such as the Young Playwrights Project, led by Vice President of Programming Deborah Sunya Moore. In Week One in the upcoming season—which explores the topic of “Invention”—Chautauqua will host STE(A)M Truck, an organization that brings mobile makerspaces to youth in low-income communities throughout Atlanta, Ga. Chautauqua will work with local summer camps and community organizations to bring youth groups from Chautauqua County onto the grounds, and will travel with the makerspaces to youth communities outside the Chautauqua gates.

The Institution has also recently launched a new literary arts program with area schools called “Battle of the Books,” an academic competition for fifth-graders, aimed at improving reading comprehension and building vocabulary, while also connecting students to the CLSC Young Readers program.

“Jenny’s efforts and commitment to the idea of engaging with local youth have served as such an inspiration,” Ewalt explains. “This is part of the Institution’s broader effort to think outside the gates—not only by inviting people who have never been here to come, but also in considering how we step outside the grounds and make connections.”
In the 2017 season, a new inter-arts initiative will bring the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, and several strong singers together to present a newly commissioned symphonic piece based on Sandra Cisneros’ first novel, *The House on Mango Street*. This original composition, which includes dance and both sung and spoken text, is titled “Mango Suite” and will lift up some of the themes explored in the classic, best-selling novel, a text often used in curricula from middle school through college.

This coming-of-age story, about a girl named Esperanza Cordero who lives on Mango Street in a Latino section of Chicago, considers the challenges and stigma of urban poverty and follows the main characters as they struggle for self-esteem as females growing up in a macho culture. The book is a CLSC selection for the upcoming season. The writer Cisneros, who has been the recipient of a MacArthur “genius grant” and many other honors, will be on the grounds the week before the premiere of the new symphonic work. She will present her writing as a CLSC selected author on July 20.

Derek Bermel, the Grammy-nominated composer and clarinetist, received the commission to create this work. Bermel is artistic director of the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and director of Cultivate, an annular institute for emerging composers at the Aaron Copland House in Corrland, New York. Vice President of Programming Deborah Sunya Moore explains that the commission of “Mango Suite” has been in the works for two years and is being jointly produced by three orchestras with which Maestro Rossen Milanov serves as music director—the CSO, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, and the Princeton University Symphony. This initiative meets two important goals for Chautauqua,” Moore says. “It takes an idea in the current national dialogue and expresses its complexity through the performing and literary arts, and then—with this creation—Chautauqua will send it on the road, taking it back outside the gates as a way to continue the ongoing national discussion.” Though “Mango Suite” will premiere at Chautauqua on Saturday, July 22, it will also be performed in Columbus and Princeton during their 2018-2019 seasons.

Cindy Letro and her husband, Francis, have been involved in Chautauqua’s inter-arts initiatives from the very beginning. As the former chair of the board for the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO), Cindy helped to bring together various parties including the Chautauqua actors and voice students, and then with the Virginia Symphony and Chorus at the Virginia Arts Festival in Norfolk. The Letros were also supporters of “The Romeo and Juliet Project” and “Go West!”—the first two major inter-arts projects that simultaneously engaged nearly all of Chautauqua’s schools and arts disciplines. “Romeo and Juliet” was one of the most amazing things I’ve ever seen in my life” Cindy Letro says, “but it nearly killed everybody. ‘Go West!’ was also magnificent, but the cost to have it travel would be prohibitive. ‘Mango Suite’ is scaled so that it can travel.”

Building Chautauqua’s Base in North Carolina: HENRY AND DYEAANN JORDAN

Within three days of their very first week at Chautauqua in 2004, North Carolinians Henry and Dyeann Jordan knew they wanted to come back. Their longtime friends, Bill and Jane Pfefferkorn, with whom they shared a deep love of the performing arts, had invited them to the Institution. For their part, the Pfefferkorns had discovered Chautauqua in 2003 when they came to Western New York out of curiosity to see the place where Bill’s grandfather, Otto W. G. Pfefferkorn, an organist of some note, had performed in the 1880s. The fascination took root.

Back home, the Jordans and Pfefferkorns talked up their experiences at Chautauqua with other neighbors, including Grace and John McKinnons, who came to the grounds in 2005. Eventually word spread among more friends at the Centenary United Methodist Church in downtown Winston-Salem. Soon a number of other couples were making the summer pilgrimage to Chautauqua. Families began developing their calendars around particular weeks in the season, reserving favorite houses, and making sure they had room to bring other newcomers to try out a week or two on the grounds.

Like Chautauquans, residents of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, share a deep sense of history. The city is home to Old Salem, the site of a Moravian settlement dating from 1766, which has been restored for educational purposes and is a tourist destination in the heart of downtown.

Winston-Salem is also home to the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, the first state-funded conservatory program for high school and college-age arts students in the nation. After nearly three decades of work as theater professionals, both Dyeann Jordan and Jane Pfefferkorn found kindred spirits in Chautauqua’s theater program. Jane had worked in the public schools as a drama teacher, while Dyeann served as director of drama at Salem Academy, a local boarding school for girls founded in 1772 by the Moravians. They knew their arts-loving neighbors would be drawn to Chautauqua.

Eventually five Winston-Salem couples—the Jordans, McKinnons, Jim and Betty Brewer, Nancy and Tom Cannon, and Tom and Donna Lambeth—decided to plan an event in the Gray Auditorium of the Old Salem Visitors’ Center. More than 130 people showed up to meet Chautauqua Foundation CEO Geof Follansbee and his wife, then-CTC artistic director Vivienne Benesch and JoAnn Falletta, music director for the BPO and Virginia Symphony Orchestra, to develop a musical version of Peter Shaffer’s stage play, *Amadeus*. The original inter-arts collaboration at Chautauqua, in 2010, featured the Chautauqua Theater Company, the Voice Program, and the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra. It was later produced off the grounds, directed by Renesch; first at Airpark, in Buffalo, with the BPO featuring Chautauqua actors and voice students, and then with the Virginia Symphony and Chorus at the Virginia Arts Festival in Norfolk.

Gay Didget. Follansbee showed a film that evening and answered questions about Chautauqua. The hosts also presented a large “family tree” to Follansbee, a scroll documenting the “viral” expansion of Chautauquans who otherwise make their homes in Winston-Salem the rest of the year.

“We had so much fun planning the event,” said Henry Jordan. As a retired specialty textile executive, he relished his role as chief organizer.

“And we did it without a caterer,” Dyeann added. “We’ve royed working together, including making enough ham biscuits to feed the crowd.”

Still coming regularly to Chautauqua for several weeks each season, the Jordans often bring their children and grandchildren to visit including their youngest (teenage) grandchild, Jack, who attends Boys’ Club. The Jordans have now turned their considerable energies to the Chautauqua Fund, serving as volunteers and generously contributing as members of the Bestor Society. They continue to find new friends on the grounds.

“When you call on people,” Henry says, “it’s not hard to find things in common. And the idea of supporting Chautauqua is an easy sell. We know it’s a great product.”
We want more children of color to explore issues through the performing, visual and literary arts in deep and authentic ways, bringing authors, composers, choreographers and directors into dialogue and conversation.

Two years ago, the Institution worked to arrange opportunities for students in the summer programs to collaborate across disciplines, and now they are beginning to do it on their own, too. “We’d like to create a scholarship for students who are particularly interested in this idea, fostering students who can be catalysts for inter-arts growth in our schools. It would give a few students the support to instigate these collaborations and activate new ideas while they are on the grounds, surrounded by many art forms,” Moore explains. “I am certain that it would have a ripple effect across all our arts programs and help us to stand out even more as creators and innovators in the arts. Chautauqua students are our future thought leaders and art makers, and we want to assure them the opportunity to have meaningful collaboration with other performing, visual and literary arts disciplines while at Chautauqua.”

Letro is also excited about the timeliness of the work. “There’s a lot of change going on in our society these days, and this piece is about cultural and racial identity. The dialogue, especially this past year, around these subjects has been painful, and we still have lots to discuss. I read the Cisneros novel many years ago in my book club. My husband and I are so excited to see what comes of this and what kind of appetite there might be around the country for this kind of performance and dialogue around the issues.”

Moore explains that Cindy Letro was “an essential voice in inter-arts discussions who agreed that we could think about inter-arts as a way to rettool and rebrand, creating some collaborations that might not be such grand scale productions. Together, with our artistic directors, Chautauqua has begun to think about inter-arts as a way to create unique, scalable interdisciplinary productions that can travel, programs that would reflect back on the historical, traveling Chautauqua. ‘Our original brand,’ as Letro put it.”

Cindy Letro is no stranger to the task of large-scale productions. She spent 25 years working in live television and marketing. Later, in addition to her board work with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, she chaired the board of Burchfield Penney Art Center during the fundraising and construction of its multi-million-dollar facility on the campus of Buffalo State College. She is currently the business manager for her husband’s law firm.

“Audiences are more and more used to having multiple arts disciplines at work on the stage,” Letro says. Last season when the CSO was set to perform Richard Strauss’s “Alpine Symphony,” the Letros made it possible for Chautauqua to project the Alpine images from Munich-based photographer and musician Tobias Melle that had also been featured in the BPO’s end-of-year concert last June—another inter-arts program on a modest scale.

“For many,” says Deborah Sonya Moore, “these inter-arts projects are beginning to define opportunities that audiences, guests, and artists don’t have at other festivals, and they are setting us apart from the standard summer music festival. We are more than a music festival—Chautauqua has the opportunity to explore issues through the performing, visual and literary arts.”

**FIRST GENERATION**

### Opening Doors For Young Artists of Color: TAMARA AND XOLANI KACELA

For Chautauqua newcomers Tamara and Xolani Kacela it didn’t take long during their first visit to the grounds to determine how they wanted to invest in the future of the Institution. The Kacelas created a scholarship called the Soulful Bliss Fund, which will be used to bring young artists of color to Chautauqua for summer study at the Schools of Music or Dance.

The Kacelas, who live in Durham, North Carolina, first came to the grounds in 2015 for Week Four and heard Duke University professor Dan Ariely’s lectures on Irrationality; they also attended a youth dance recital and a Music School Festival Orchestra concert, immediately recognizing the valuable exposure to professional artists that students receive on the stages and in the master classes at Chautauqua. “We saw that we could make some contribution to that,” Tamara said. “Yes,” Xolani added. “We want more children of color to experience this place.”

Recently married at the time, the Kacelas had heard about Chautauqua from a member of the Unitarian congregation where Xolani has served since 2013 as an associate minister, specializing in pastoral care. In addition to his local work, Xolani holds an adjunct position teaching Pastoral Ministry in the Meadville-Lombard Theological School in Chicago. He also still serves as a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force, traveling once a month to Washington, D.C., where he is Air Force Chaplain at the Joint Force Headquarters of the National Guard and Protestant Chaplain with the 313th Wing at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.

The Durham church member also told Xolani and Tamara that they needed to meet Chautauqua’s Director of Religion Robert Franklin, since they shared a Morehouse College connection. Kacela had earned his undergraduate degree at Morehouse some years after Franklin, but before Franklin returned to serve as president of the college.

Xolani received his seminary training at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and at Brite Divinity School (Texas Christian University) in Fort Worth, where he also served churches. He then went on to earn a Ph.D. in Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Counseling at Brite. Tamara, a native of Fort Worth, graduated from Prairie View A&M University in business, and is the proud mother of a 24-year-old daughter, Britty, who now lives in Portland, Oregon.

Both of the Kacelas are high energy, Tamara loves to exercise, and Xolani is a certified instructor of spinning, yoga, and aqua group exercise. In addition to the multiple avenues for recreation offered at Chautauqua (Xolani also loves to fish), the Kacelas were immediately drawn to the interfaith aspect of the Department of Religion offerings.

In his blog called “Mastering Your Own Faith,” Xolani explained that he urges readers “to live more fully into their religious convictions and to be strong and courageous about their values. In a pluralistic world,” he continued, “it can be hard to speak your truth.” Originally ordained as a United Methodist minister, Kacela moved to the Unitarian Universalist faith, finding himself more at home there. “In our faith, there is a strong sense of dissent. In fact, dissent is how America was formed.” In May 2017, his book Mastering Your Own Faith will be published by Skinner House Press.

The Kacelas’ decision to support Chautauqua by establishing their scholarship was both quick and firm. Xolani says he believes in saying yes to new opportunities. “Preparation is a big part of it. When a door is opened, you have to be ready to walk through it,” he said. As first-generation Chautauquans, the Kacelas are now opening new doors for young artists.
A Trio of Pianists Raises the Bar at Chautauqua

New Zealander Nicola Melville came to the United States for the first time in 1989 to attend Chautauqua’s Piano Program in the School of Music. She had recently completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Victoria in Wellington. “Chautauqua was my first experience of America, and it was magical,” she says. “I asked, is the rest of America like this?” She laughs. Chautauqua, she says, changed the course of her life.

Melville won the program’s concerto competition that summer, and part of her prize was an invitation to return to the Institution to play the following year. Instead of going to graduate school in Hungary as she had intended, Melville returned to Chautauqua for the summer and subsequently enrolled in the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, studying with Rebecca Penneys. Melville is now professor and chair of the Music Department at Carlton College in Northfield, Minnesota. She is best known for her performances and recordings of contemporary piano music by award-winning composers.

Last fall, Melville and pianist John Milbauer, a Chautauqua classmate from that same summer of 1989, were named co-directors of the Chautauqua Piano Program after having served as interim co-directors beginning in 2012. Raised in northern Wisconsin, Milbauer studied music and classics at Harvard College before earning degrees from the Eastman School of Music, The Juilliard School, and the Manhattan School of Music. With a Fulbright grant, he also earned a certificate at the Liszt Academy in Budapest. Today, he is associate professor at the Fred Fox School of Music at the University of Arizona and performs an ambitious schedule of concerts and master classes worldwide. Milbauer says his early days at Chautauqua were also transformative. “The Piano Program completely altered my trajectory in music,” he says.

Co-directors Milbauer and Melville will be joined this summer by Chautauqua favorite Alexander Gavrylyuk (Sasha) Gavrylyuk, who has officially accepted the position of artistic advisor and artist-in-residence for the program.

“This is a very new development in my life and a new phase in the Piano Program’s history,” says Gavrylyuk. “John and Nikki have done a wonderful job in creating a proactive and meaningful program, which is evidenced by the number of great students who keep coming back. I am thrilled to join in going forward."

“Chautauqua’s vice president of programming, Deborah Suya Moore, also praised the effort: “John and Nikki did not just tide us over while we searched for new leadership, they changed the structure of the piano curriculum in such a way that it makes Chautauqua stand apart. They have opened the experience up, exposing students to many different styles and techniques. As a result, we have seen not only returning applicants from leading schools but leading teachers who want to come back. Piano at Chautauqua is on the map now in a fresh way,” she says.

“For his part,” Moore continues, “Alexander Gavrylyuk brings an authentic commitment to true dialogue on many levels—with his colleagues in the Piano Program, across departments and platforms at the Institution, and at the spiritual and artistic level that exists beyond words and verbal articulation. I look forward to Sasha’s challenging not only our students but the Institution as a whole on our journey to explore what it is to be human.”

Moore also noted how fortunate the Institution has been in bringing Gavrylyuk on board at this particular time in his career. “Sasha is an international piano luminary with a big following in Europe and Asia,” she says. “We are catching him at a moment in which his reputation in the United States is taking off, having just completed performances with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra that included a tour through prestigious venues in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai. While his first two summers in the Piano Program will find him in residency for three weeks, my hope is that his presence and time here on the grounds will increase."

These three stellar pianists bring different strengths and specialties to the work, but all share a unifying philosophy around the study of music; namely, the desire to create a safe environment in which gifted students can take risks, experiment with new and unfamiliar repertoire, and understand the mechanics of the piano and the human body that plays it all in the larger, interdisciplinary context of

Supporting young pianists at Chautauqua:

“‘They became my ‘American parents’ and I became their ‘Korean daughter.’ If I had not met them, and if I could not have chance to know them, I would not be able to have such a great impression of Chautauqua and United States.”

—Soyeon An, Chautauqua piano student from Seoul National University

“We support two girls every year,” Barb explained. “They are usually from Asia.” One of their students, Soyeon An, came to Chautauqua from Korea four years ago and has since visited the Landays in Gainesville on three occasions. The young pianist has given recitals for their close friends and special families from Steve’s practice. In addition, on Labor Day weekend, 2014, they flew Soyeon from Rochester—where she attended the Eastman School of Music—to perform an afternoon concert for Steve’s 101-year-old mother and two dozen relatives and friends.

As might be expected, the Landays are also great fans of Alexander Gavrylyuk, recently named artistic advisor and artist-in-residence working alongside John Milbauer and Nicola Melville, the new co-chairs of the Chautauqua Piano Program. “Alexander is so gentle
Chautauqua—“such a versatile palette of human expression,” as Gavrylyuk puts it.

Milbauer specializes in helping students overcome physical obstacles in their playing. He is attuned to each student’s height, hand shape, and length of limbs (among other physical factors) that may affect their playing as their young bodies are growing and changing rapidly. “We ask, what is best for this student? What does he or she need? And we try to create a healthy, open experience for each individual—physically, mentally, emotionally, and psychologically,” Milbauer explains. The method is Socratic, “a drawing out rather than an imposition of style or technique,” he adds.

When Gavrylyuk began his piano studies as a youngster, he says he faced the opposite kind of approach. “I started at a Soviet institution in Ukraine, and it was very traditional, very totalitarian. It was an approach that did not allow students to develop their own passions. In my case I eventually had to completely change the way I see music. I had to rethink the concepts behind the music, the way I prepared to perform, and how I learned the pieces. I began to understand at age 18 or so that music has a much bigger meaning than I had thought. It is a selfless endeavor.”

Gavrylyuk relishes the opportunity to emphasize enjoyment in learning. “Students who are confident in their natural strengths and who experience a healthy environment are more likely to be able to improve in those areas that are not their strengths,” he explains. Such an environment, he adds, is mutually inspiring for students and instructors.

Melville and Milbauer have noticed that piano students today have the opportunity to watch perhaps too many recorded performances and videos as they learn. These edited performances, they say, tend to create an appearance of perfection. “Students can develop such grand expectations of themselves from this abundance of recorded performance. In turn, that can create too much pressure,” Melville says.

“In years gone by,” she continues, “the input we received as students was from real life situations—concerts and master classes. What’s more, the quality of a recording, which is digitally compressed, can never approach the warmth and vibrancy of a live hall with a live human being playing the instrument.”

“We want to cultivate an artistic sensibility in our students that is rooted in the beauty of the sound,” Milbauer adds, “continuing to uphold the history of live performance in which the authentic quality of the sound is very important.”

Melville is pleased that their leadership team represents three different styles, which are also augmented by visiting artists who’ve made careers in contemporary music and who represent different ways of being a musician in the 21st century. “I think it is harder for musicians in this day to carve out their own niches,” she says, “and we want to build a breadth of understanding and flexibility of mind in our students that will have some impact on how they see themselves going forward in the field of music.”

“Students these days,” says Milbauer, “are much more responsive to multiple points of view.”

“And teaching the mechanics of the piano, the instrument itself, is not normally something you have time to talk about in a traditional academic setting,” Melville adds. “At Chautauqua we have five weeks to pack everything in and to look outside ourselves and see what else is going on at the Institution.”

Last season Chautauqua piano students created their own inter-arts performance at McKnight Hall that incorporated spoken word and dance. “That is something that I hope will become more a part of Chautauqua,” said Melville.

“It seems we are at a moment in which the whole Institution is seeking to integrate the arts, and with Sasha coming on board, we are also broadening our vision to be more international.”

Gavrylyuk has already begun brainstorming with his colleagues about ways that the Piano Program can integrate the ideas behind the Institution’s weekly themes into the student experience. “For example,” he says, “Invention—the theme for Week One this year—is a big part of musical history. Other art forms such as opera have been very inventive, shaping how we understand the idea of phrasing in music, especially in Russian music.”

The conversations among the trio continue. Their excitement in the new venture is palpable. Says Melville: “Chautauqua is a hidden gem, and I don’t want to lose that special character that I first experienced when I came here from New Zealand all those years ago, but the world is getting smaller, and Chautauqua is a great place for artists from across the world to be in conversation with our community.”

**Of her experience with the Landays, Soyeon An wrote:**

“It was the first time ever for me to be in the United States in 2012 to participate in the Chautauqua music festival. Everything was new and challenging for me except when I play the piano. Communicating with people in English was much harder than I thought, and it took a while to adjust to the new environment.

Meanwhile, I had a chance to meet people who financially supported me for the program. I still remember the first time I met them. Barb and Steve took several pictures on our way to an Italian restaurant. They spoke very slowly and clearly with a kind and warm smile for me who was still not very good at English. They asked a lot of questions about me, and I felt they were very curious and caring about me. Since then, they came to every event I played to support me. If I could not make it, they emailed me and gave me love and hugs. It seems we are at a moment in which the whole Institution is seeking to integrate the arts, and with Sasha coming on board, we are also broadening our vision to be more international.”

After the festival ended and I came back to Korea, we kept in touch through email. I had to go to the USA for my master’s degree in 2014, and they suggested me to visit them and have a recital as well! That was the beginning of the blossoming of our relationship to grow this much. At every moment I had troubles and I needed them for preparing to study abroad, they were there for me, and we became a family. They became my ‘American parents’ and I became their ‘Korean daughter.’ If I did not meet them, and if I could not have chance to know them, I would not be able to have such a great impression of Chautauqua and United States.”

**Photo: Chautauqua Institution**
When Sam Hazlett III walked into the second-floor board room in the Colonnade this past season, he took one look at the broad view of Bestor Plaza and suddenly realized that it had been six decades since the last time he stood in that room. “My grandfather, also named Sam Hazlett, died 60 years ago this summer,” he said. “He started coming to Chautauqua in 1900 from his home outside Pittsburgh. He loved to fish in Chautauqua Lake. My grandmother came here because of her involvement with the church meetings and the Presbyterian House. My grandfather had nothing to do with the Institution until the 1930s.”

As many Chautauquans know, the senior Sam Hazlett ended up leading a group of cottage owners in the formation of the Chautauqua Reorganization Corporation to avert foreclosure on the Institution’s mortgage and other debts. It was 1933, at the height of The Great Depression, and President Arthur Bestor had announced that Chautauqua might not open again the next season.

“They raised money by ‘selling’ the trees as investments in the Institution,” Hazlett recalled. “My cousins remember many of the cottages being boarded up but the Hazlett cottage, at 33 Foster, has survived to this day, much like it was originally.” Eventually, by the efforts of many, the Institution’s debt was cleared, the Chautauqua Foundation was established as an independent entity, and Samuel M. Hazlett would become the Institution’s eighth president, beginning in 1947.

His grandson also remembers how the family always tended a flourishing vegetable garden on the south end of the grounds where the Chautauqua Overlook condos now sit. The women and girls in the family helped every summer with the canning of their produce. “My grandfather gardened there until his death in 1956,” Hazlett said. “It was a practice he started during the war when everyone had a Victory Garden.”

Hazlett and his cousins took Chautauqua for granted as kids, he said. “They all worked at the Boys’ and Girls’ Club. “It didn’t seem like anything special until I became an apprentice counselor at age 13 and was paid for my work with a gate ticket.” Hazlett smiled. “There was something about that ticket that made me want to use it.”

Hazlett’s father, Sam Jr., was a physician in Greenfield, Pennsylvania, where the family lived in the off-season. As a teenager, Sam III began going to lectures during his summers on the grounds, and he “fell in” with a group of music students. Jack Russell, then head of the music program at the College of Wooster, was the Institution’s organist as well. Russell schooled Hazlett in music appreciation, and they became fast friends. Hazlett also became an opera buff. He had been friends with Chautauquan and architectural historian Jeffrey Simpson since childhood and the two young men would meet every week and go to the operas at Norton Hall.

“Jeffrey didn’t do Club,” Hazlett said. “He was always in the library working with Alfreda Irwin.” (Irwin was Chautauqua’s distinguished librarian in that era.)

Today, Sam Hazlett III, who is a practicing cardiologist in Indianapolis, still takes in as much of Chautauqua as he possibly can each summer. He especially loves the play workshops and goes faithfully to the book review sessions hosted by CLSC.

It was his uncle, Howard “Mike” Hazlett, who came up with the idea many years ago of creating a chaplaincy fund for the Institution, the first ever established. For most of his life, Sam has wanted to enlarge the fund so that it could fully support a chaplain in residence for a week. Finally, he and his wife, Margaret—longtime supporters of the annual fund as members of the Bestor Society—have fulfilled that dream through the Promise Campaign with a generous, multi-year commitment to the Samuel M. Hazlett Memorial Chaplaincy.

“That last summer when I was 12, I came into this board room with my grandfather,” Hazlett said wistfully. “He was very sick and weak, but he was determined to open the season. We went over to the Amp together, and he gave his welcome, tapped the gavel three times, and then went to the clinic on the grounds. They immediately took him to WCA Hospital in Jamestown where he died of leukemia on July 23, 1956.” His legacy, however, lives on.

Photo: Gregory Funka