

Thirty Years with



Garrett Lakes Arts Festival
Presenting | Educating | Enriching



Maryland Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet — Joe Lovinsky, Horn; Dan Sherlock, Tuba; Wayne Wells, Trombone; Nathan Clark, Trumpet; and Scott Nelson, Trumpet.

PHOTO BY LANCE C. BELL

Written by: **Linda Ross Bradley**

The Garrett Lakes Arts Festival, commonly known as GLAF, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Thousands of Garrett Countians and visitors to the area have enjoyed a variety of performances over the years. How did GLAF become one of the most popular cultural associations of the area? Who had the original idea and birthed the organization? What mission motivates GLAF? It all started with a vision and a dream.

Joan Crawford was one of the early creative thinkers who was excited to bring the arts to Garrett County. Through her efforts, she helped realize the dream and formulate the mission of GLAF. In an article ten years ago, she wrote, in part,

“A Vision Realized, A Dream Come True”

It began as a vision shared by Garrett County native Kathryn Sincell, a lyric soprano, and Erick Friedman, violin virtuoso from Yale University, whose dream

was to have a classical music festival in the mountains of western Maryland. When Dr. Steve Herman, the new president of Garrett College in 1986, heard of the interest in a summer festival, he asked me, (Joan Crawford) as an English/writing professor, to call a meeting of appropriate persons to discuss the possibilities.

Building on Garrett County’s heritage with the Chautauqua programs in Mountain Lake Park during the early 20th century, we agreed to rekindle the Chautauqua spirit. We intended to present the musical programs within a cultural series that would include drama, dance, puppetry, story-telling and other performing arts, with 1987 as the first season.

The name for the new organization would be Garrett Lakes Arts Festival, to recognize the county’s several lakes. GLAF’s mission was to present a diversified program of affordable entertainment that would attract visitors to the area and preserve local culture. Financial support came from \$500 from each of forty-one founders, advertising in the printed program,

and a grant from the Garrett and Maryland State Arts Councils.

That first season featured seven different events, including the dramatic production “Harvey,” classical music concerts, the Bob Brown Puppets, clog dancing, Scottish Highland piping, storyteller Gamble Rodgers, and a magic/mime performance. Total attendance for the summer was over 2,000.

In 1997 the Sprenger-Lang Foundation made a significant contribution of seed money for programs and workshops, and season sponsors had come on board. GLAF’s future was looking bright. The board of directors amended the mission statement to include an educational component, so that summer workshops would become a permanent part of the seasonal program.

The vision of music on the mountain has become a reality; the dream has come true.

This year, 2016, marks GLAF’s 30th anniversary of bringing affordable cultural arts performances to Garrett County. As GLAF has grown, it has sponsored increasingly diverse programs, including the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Maryland Symphony Orchestra, performances of Celtic music, ballet, and concerts by several US military bands. The opening of the Community Aquatic and Recreation Complex (CARC) at Garrett College a few years ago has provided another venue for some of the shows. In addition to its outreach to the public, GLAF has added a robust educational feature to its programming. In partnership with Garrett County Public Schools, GLAF has provided enriching experiences for

hundreds of students with programs such as various musical concerts, ballet productions, and military band concerts (where some students played with the band). In addition, GLAF has taken some high school band and chorus members to Washington DC’s Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to participate in the annual sing-along of Handel’s Messiah. In 2016, for the first time, high school students traveled to the historic Maryland Theatre in Hagerstown to see the opera “Carmen,” and were treated to a backstage tour and conversations with musicians and Maryland Symphony Orchestra director Elizabeth Schulze.

GLAF has a rich heritage in Garrett County, starting with visionaries and dreamers like Kathryn Sincell, Erick Friedman, Steve Herman, Joan Crawford, and many of their colleagues. Countless volunteers and donors throughout the years have continued to support GLAF and have caused it to grow.

Current executive director Mary Callis has been successful in engaging a variety of new and exciting cultural events for Garrett County. One current emphasis is more collaboration with Garrett County Public Schools, in order to introduce and expand the arts in the lives of local children, and to foster an appreciation for various performing art genres. Mary Callis says, “We hope to see the vision continue to expand and even more dreams come true.”

For more information see: artsandentertainment.org

**Inset: Alice in Wonderland by the Ballet Theatre of Maryland.
Below: River City Brasstacular.**

