

# Concert Association Gave Oneonta Early Look At Great Talents

85TH/From A1

The Oneonta Concert Association is closing out its 85th season with Ron Carter's Golden Striker Trio. Carter, a two-time Grammy winning bassist who performed with the Miles Davis Quintet, B.B. King and Lena Horne, on Friday, May 17 at Foothills.

On Friday, April 26, the OCA celebrated the anniversary with a gala and display at the Greater Oneonta Historical Society, showcasing 85 seasons of programs and sheet music. "One of the hopeful outcomes of this display is that people can come forward with programs we don't have," said Marge Merzig.

Formerly the Community Concert Association, the group was formed in 1929 by Ethyl Mills, the organist at the First Presbyterian Church. The first concert, baritone Lawrence

Tibbett - he went on to have a long career with the Metropolitan Opera - was in the former junior high school on Academy Street.

In the late 1950s, the OCA broke a color barrier even the Daughters of the American Revolution had avoided: Barred from performing in D.C.'s Constitution Hall in 1939 (Eleanor Roosevelt invited her to sing at the Lincoln Memorial instead), Marian Anderson, the famed black contralto, sang at Oneonta's Armory, "the only place in town that could hold as many people as they expected," said Olga Zona Irwin. "Norman Roper had to escort her down the aisle, there were so many people. She was my idol; it was such a thrill that she came to Oneonta."

But dealing with famous musicians always has its own quirks.

"My husband, John Mazarak, got involved in 1959," said MaryAnn Mazarak. "Before the concert, this star asked if I would wear HER mink coat so it wouldn't get stolen. Well, I wasn't about to give up MY Bresee fur, that I'd saved my own money for, to wear her coat."

The coat was not stolen, but at a post-concert party, the host brought Mazarak the singer's coat by mistake. "He quickly went back downstairs and got me mine," she said, laughing. "I don't know what she thought would happen to her mink in our little town."

Another time, cellist Leonard Rose was performing on the high school stage when all of the sudden, the movie screen began to come down on him. "He stopped, moved his chair forward and continued with the program," said Paul

Scheele. "We had a lot of laughs about it at the party later on."

And when Scheele began booking, he had to make a desperate, last-minute change to the program. "Jamie and Ruth Laredo were scheduled to play, but we got a call from Columbia Artists saying 'They don't wish to play together.' Turns out, they had gotten divorced, and Samuel Sanders had to replace Ruth."

Jamie Laredo later married a student of his, and appeared with the series twice more.

And, 85 seasons later, the OCA continues its mission to bring bright new talent to the Oneonta stage. This season, Duo Parnas, the granddaughters of cellist Leonard Parnas, who performed with OCA in the 1940s, gave their first Oneonta concert.



Ian Austin/HOMETOWN ONEONTA  
**OCA Board Members Fred Johnson and Margery Merzig reminisce over decades of playbills at the Friday, April 26, celebration.**

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*PROTEST/From A1*

In communities where pipelines are already in place - in many cases, for decades. 160 people have RSVP's from Otsego, Delaware and Chenango counties.

Representatives from One-Call will explain the "Call 811 Before You Dig" program, which requires excavators to get a "dig ticket" from the gas companies and mark where existing pipelines are.

In addition, representatives from Columbia Gas Transmission, the parent company of the Millennium Pipeline, and Enterprise Products Co. will be on hand to introduce themselves as local operators. "This is not about fracking," Roberts insisted. "It's about safety, to provide guidance and help."

Though the meeting is not open to the public, protesters were being encouraged to bring signs, banners and posters to make their voices heard. "They wouldn't be having these 'routine safety meetings' if there weren't pipelines coming in," said Marnar.

"The last time there was such a safety meeting, two of our people infiltrated," she continued. "They reported EMS personnel were alarmed by what they'd have to deal with in the event of such a catastrophe. It's not something they can handle - to put a pipeline through towns with only EMS services is criminal."

On April 11, two workers died of injuries from a flash fire that broke out at a pipeline gas compressor station in Tyler County, Texas. "It just keeps getting worse and worse," she said.

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