

CARY BUSINESS JOURNAL

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BLOCK: Sees in Cary a need for indoor venues with good acoustics for mid-sized performances



HITTING THE HIGH NOTES:

For violinist Mary Page Block, locating in Cary made good business sense. P 35

Mary Page Block

Violinist

Mary Page Block of Cary is a freelance violinist who has made a musician's living by both teaching and performing. She trained at the North Carolina School of the Arts and the Eastman School of Music in New York.

Returning to the Triangle in 1986, she settled in Cary and began performing and taking on students. She played with the Celtic group Bragh Adair, composing for group as well, and has played solo concerts at Meymandi Concert Hall, the North Carolina Museum of Art and the Koka Booth Amphitheatre at Regency Park, among other venues.

Page Block recently launched a business, Arioso Strings, which plays for weddings and other special events.

Describe what you do as a freelance musician.

As a musician in the Cary area, I have many musical pursuits. Through my company, Arioso Strings, I contract and play for weddings or other special events. I also teach many violin students from my home studio,

the Cary String School, and perform in local concerts.

What do you like best and least about pursuing art as a career?

I enjoy many aspects of being a musician. For me, teaching and performing have been equally satisfying. Not all performers enjoy teaching or can teach, but I have always loved nurturing children's musical abilities. My mother was a piano teacher and, growing up, my own music teachers were the most influential people in my life. I also love running my own business, and to be a successful musician you must be able to promote your work.

Generating all of your own benefits, such as health insurance and retirement plans, are probably the most difficult things about an artistic career. Of course, like any small business, taking a break also means losing your income.

What are the advantages of being an artist in Cary?

The advantages to living in Cary are wonderful.

SEE BLOCK PAGE 42



Violinist Mary Page Block has founded her own company, Arioso Strings.

FROM PAGE 35

When I decided to return to the area, I chose Cary specifically for its close location to the North Carolina Symphony and for Cary's growing family population and good schools – a wonderful environment for teaching music to children.

How supportive of art do you feel the community is, especially of your field?

It is very easy to teach violin in Cary. There aren't enough quality teachers and I always have a waiting list.

Performing in Cary is more difficult. The Koka Booth Amphitheatre at Regency Park offers a fantastic venue for large summer time concerts and the Sertoma Amphitheater at the Fred G. Bond Metro Park is nice for smaller outdoor concerts. But both of these venues rely on electronic sound systems which give an inferior sound to the music.

They are good for family picnics and pops concerts, but not adequate for a deeper musical experience.

There are not enough indoor venues with good acoustics for small to medium concerts.

There are a few churches and the Page-Walker Hotel that do small indoor concerts, but it would be nice to have some smaller concert series or theater productions with better facilities.

How strong is the community of musicians in Cary? Are there opportunities to build relationships?

It has improved a lot in the last 20 years. Most of us meet as we play throughout the Triangle at various events such as the North Carolina Symphony, Triangle Chamber Orchestra and the North Carolina Theatre.

What resources are needed in Cary to enhance the cultural life of the community?

Eventually Cary will be large enough to support an indoor auditorium with good acoustics and lighting for visual art, theater and music. I believe we are growing fast enough that we will need our own artistic facilities in the near future. It would take an organized group of citizens and our public officials working together to gain the support of the business community for quality artistic facilities.