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### **Presentation by Thomas M. Seelbach on May 3** **“Celebrating the Faculty Club Steinway Piano”**

The Columbus Torch Club’s long-time secretary, Thomas M. Seelbach, will deliver his Torch paper on Thursday, May 3, in the form of a recital on the Faculty Club’s Steinway piano, which was restored last year.

In choosing the music he will perform, Thom says he is turning to five composers whose works exemplify “the invention of the piano, the Age of Enlightenment, the evolution of the piano and of culture.” The composers and their pieces that Thom will play are:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (b. January 27, 1756 – d. December 5, 1791)  
*Piano Sonata #6, K. 284 in D major, 1st Movement*  
Composed in 1775 at age 19

Ludwig van Beethoven (b. December 16, 1770 – d. March 26, 1827)  
*Piano Sonata #16, Op. 31 No1 in G major, 1st Movement*  
Composed in 1802 at age 32

Frederic Chopin (b. March 1, 1810 – d. October 17, 1849)  
*Nocturne Op. 48 No. 2 in F# minor*  
Composed in 1841 at age 31

Franz Liszt (b. October 22, 1811 – d. July 31, 1886)  
*Hungarian Rhapsody No. 11 in A minor*  
Composed in 1847 at age 36

Scott Joplin (b. November 24, 1868 – d. April 1, 1917)  
*Palm Leaf Rag in Bb (plus two short codas)*  
Composed in 1903 at age 35

“Musically, these pieces are connected by the use of ‘unison passages’ and codas,” Thom says.

## A Brief History of the Piano

*To provide context for his piano recital, Thom Seelbach wrote the following history of the piano and discusses the interplay of the instrument, music and culture.*

Bartolomeo Cristofori is credited with inventing the piano, starting with the case, sound board, strings and keyboard of the harpsichord. Cristofori solved the hammer problem with an “escape” mechanism whereby the hammer strikes the strings and immediately falls away (escapes) from them quietly, allowing the strings to continue vibrating. This mechanical “action” triggered by pressing a key invokes a lever which throws the hammer at the strings more quickly than the key is depressed and lifts a damper from the string as long as the key is pressed.



**Thom Seelbach at the piano.**

Cristofori also invented the soft pedal which moves the set of hammers so they only strike one string, for a different and softer tone. He built 20 pianos, one per year, between 1710 and 1731. Besides being the most renowned harpsichord maker in Florence, he was the curator of the Medici museum, a collection of musical instruments of all kinds. For example, the hammered dulcimer is a box of strings played by hand-held hammers and has no dampers, so every string is free to vibrate sympathetically. This makes it difficult to articulate a melody. Musicologists classify the piano, historically, as a “keyed zither.”

An Italian journalist, Scipione Maffei, published a story on Cristofori's invention along with diagrams. Word spread to other European instrument makers. In Freiberg, Germany, the organ, harpsichord and clavichord maker Gottfried Silbermann devised the damper pedal. In

Bavaria, Johann Andreas Stein built the piano that inspired Mozart to write his 6th sonata (on Thom's program). There were two strings per note and the hammers were covered with leather. Mozart wrote to his father that he liked the Stein piano's “singing tone.” The frame was made entirely of wood. Compared to today's pianos, its tone was soft, clear and had less sustain. The action was lighter and shallower. One of Beethoven's pianos was made in London by the Broadwood firm. It had six octaves and a louder, fuller sound, but was not as dynamically sensitive as the Viennese pianos of Mozart. The term “fortepiano” is often used to distinguish these earlier instruments from the later pianos.

From 1790 to 1890, musicians and composers preferred a more powerful, sustained sound. The Industrial Revolution made available high-quality steel for strings and precision casting of iron frames. Key depth increased. The five octaves of Mozart's pianos increased to  $7 \frac{1}{3}$  (88 keys). The effect of the damper/sustain pedal became more pronounced and was used heavily by Chopin and Liszt. In contrast, Mozart and Beethoven made light use of the damper pedal.

The biggest revolution in piano technology was patented by a Boston piano maker, Alpheus Babcock, in 1825 for square pianos and by another Boston piano maker, Jonas Chickering, in 1843 for grand pianos: a full cast iron frame withstanding 18 tons of string tension. Today, the OS Kelly Foundry in Springfield, Ohio, casts Steinway piano frames (also called harps or plates). Molten iron is poured into a sand mold.

Lathes precisely grind and sand out the details. The frames are then sprayed in bronze powder mixed with gold or silver metallic paint and clear coated to a smooth finish.

Another innovation came from Paris in 1821. Sebastian Erard invented the “double escapement” action, which permits a note to be repeated even if the key has not returned to its full height, allowing rapid playing. Chopin and Liszt both played pianos from the Erard firm.

Completing the list of developments are the use of three strings per note, dense wool felt hammers, the sostenuto (middle) pedal, overstrung scales and duplex scaling. The sostenuto pedal lifts the dampers for only the notes already sustained. Overstrung scale, or “cross string,” is an arrangement of strings within the case using two bridges on the soundboard, allowing longer strings to fit. Bass strings cross over the tenor and treble strings. Duplex scaling makes use of the un-tuned part of the string, to size it to resonate with the tuned string.

Cross-stringing was first applied to grand pianos by Henry Steinway, Jr., in 1859. Theodore Steinway invented duplex scaling in 1872. Today's Steinway grand piano weighs 990 pounds, contains 12,000 individual parts, including 230 strings (each with 160 to 200 pounds of pressure), and requires 300 hours of labor to build.

With the Age of Enlightenment in the 1700s came the democratization of music, which brought it out of the confines of small performances for the aristocracy. Operas, oratorios, chamber music and concertos were being performed in public halls and middle class households. Music appreciation, sophistication and musicianship spread to the general public. Composers had another source of income – public performances and publication – besides court sponsorship.

The piano wasn't the only instrument to evolve. Flutes replaced recorders. Woodwinds and brass were improved with better keying mechanisms. The modern violin, viola and cello replaced the older viol family of instruments. Keyboards evolved to satisfy the musical tastes and larger venues of the times.

The powerful ideas and cultural changes sweeping Europe (and the American Colonies) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century can offer insight and context to our world today. The impact of today's social media and the Internet-savvy younger generation is akin to the rise in the 1700s of scientific academies, Masonic lodges, literary salons, coffee houses and printed books and pamphlets. The monarchy and Roman Catholic Church were not controlling the intellectual “air waves,” so to speak. This was the era that birthed the piano, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Classical music, which can still stimulate, entertain and even elevate us.

## **Biography of Thom Seelbach**

Thom Seelbach was born and raised in Columbus in a very religious household. He was educated through 12 years of Catholic schools, when the teachers were predominantly nuns. His father, Don Seelbach, a precocious clarinet and saxophone player, played big band music at the Valley Dale Ballroom while still attending North High School. After his industrial engineering career, Don played with the High Street Stompers and is in the Columbus Senior Musicians Hall of Fame.

In this shadow, Thom opted for piano lessons, starting with neighbors and nuns for his teachers. After fits of quitting and restarting, he was accepted during high school by his first professional teacher, Marshall Barnes, a professor of music theory and composition at The Ohio State University. Later, Thom

earned a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance from Ohio State with a minor in music history. He decided, however, that he needed a different career path to earn a living. After completing a B.S. degree in computer science, he has worked for 32 years as a software developer at OCLC (Online Computer Library Center).

Thom resumed his piano studies in 2006 with George Haddad, professor emeritus of music at Ohio State. Professor Haddad, who died in 2010, was president of the Columbus Torch Club in 1973.

Along the way, Thom fathered two sons, both graduates of Ohio State's College of Engineering. He has been a Torch member since 2006. Other interests include enjoying nature, identifying trees and wildflowers, art museums, history museums, and natural science museums. He plays golf, ping pong, and volleyball and runs with friends for exercise and conversation. He's also known for supporting the local daily newspaper and always having a book and DVD checked out of the library. More unusual and less well known is that Thom has been a follower of the Indian teacher, Prem Rawat, since he was 19.

### **President's Message: State of the Club Address**

This is the last message of my term as president, and I feel obliged to report on the state of the club as I hand over the reins to Tom Costantiello for his year in the spotlight. I will be handing off the strongest club in Torch by virtually any measure, but make no mistake, I inherited the strongest club this past July. Although not the purpose of her visit, Anne Sterling's observations, as one of the most experienced officers in the IATC, helped to validate our stature. No one person manages this club. Any successes are achieved through the overall board and the support of the membership.



**Rich Davis**

As I've previously mentioned. We are the largest club, standing at 88 members right now with the approval of five new members this year. Dorothy provides the process and enthusiastic encouragement to admit new members, but it is the responsibility of the overall membership to identify potential members, and you have certainly done that. The addition of five new members sustains our size, despite attrition, so that we remain about two and a half times the size of the average club.

The other major impact that the membership provides is through the many presentations delivered, broadening our own knowledge base. I'm proud to say that ALL of our presenters this year were first-time presenters. This is a large and learned group to present to, and 75% of the population already has significant fear of public speaking, according to statistics. To those of you who have presented both this year and in the past, I give CONGRATULATIONS. The first time is the hardest, and I found each of you this year is proud of your accomplishment. (The next time is easier.) To the membership, thank you for the encouragement through your questions, applause and positive comments.

Anne also commented on our financial stability. The year's finances are not closed yet, but our recently won tax-exempt status – credited to our treasurer, Howard Gauthier – has helped to fund improved appetizers and meals while still living within our revenue. Our reserves are approximately equal to our annual expenses, which is a generous safety margin. A recent vote by the board set a minimum reserve level and a commitment to use the difference to protect against increases in dues, which should not increase for many years. There are still multiple clubs that have not paid their IATC dues as they struggle with their finances.

Anne took a copy of our roster, a wonderful resource maintained by our secretary, Thom Seelbach, who also manages our invitations and meal count, thereby controlling wastage. *The Torch Lighter*, which you are now reading, is edited by Steve Sterrett, who keeps the contributors to their deadlines and creates a colorful, well-formatted, and informative newsletter on behalf of all of us. Other board members contribute in their special roles, and ALL raise important considerations in regard to the club and provide sage advice on how to continue the excellence here in Columbus. I express my thanks to each and request that you do the same!

## **Member's Moment: Diane Selby**

*Presented by Nancy Wardwell on April 5, 2018*

I can't tell you what a pleasure it was to spend time with Diane Selby – and you couldn't know how perfect the April timing is. Since 1970, April has had National Volunteer Week. At Ohio State, April is the Month of Service. What Diane has had is a LIFETIME of service! Whether paid or not, Diane's entire career has been SERVICE! It has been said that a community couldn't afford itself without the work of those who volunteer – and Diane's contributions are beyond price.

Diane was born in Lorain up on Lake Erie. When she was five, her family moved to Madison, Wis., where she developed an abiding love of winter with its skating and sledding. She even studied a bit of ballet. Her family moved on to Upper Arlington where she went to Arlington High School. She says she majored in activities. She was a cheerleader. She was on the debate team. In her first year, the team won the state championship. And she was in the choir, where she met Dave. They went steady. Who knew then she would end up marrying him?

When it came time for college, her parents wanted her to go anywhere but Ohio State. But guess where she ended up: Ohio State. (Tuition was \$75 a quarter.) She started working in the library, majored in English and speech, and became active in student government. One thing led to others, and she ended up working for Dean Christine Conway in beautiful Pomerene Hall.

In that time, Diane had had three life-changing match ups. She pledged Kappa Kappa Gamma, was elected to the women's honorary Mortar Board, and became engaged to Dave, a football player on that 1968 National Championship team. So she also became a long time OSU football groupie! She married Dave, who later shot the official football films for Ohio State. They had three successful daughters and now three exceptional grandchildren.

Diane became editor of *The Key*, the Kappa Kappa Gamma magazine, and later became executive director of Mortar Board, which began at Ohio State and now has a presence on 200 campuses.

Her career in service has included the presidencies of Columbus Alumna of KKG, Columbus Mortar Board, The Kelton House, National Association of College Honor Societies, National Panhellenic Editors,



**Nancy Wardwell (left) presented Diane Selby for Member's Moment.**



Worthington Women's Club, OSU Retirees Association and Worthington Band Boosters. She has served in many offices with the Junior League of Columbus and has provided 50 years of volunteer service. She served for many years as a Brownie and Girl Scout leader, Sunday school teacher and chair of vacation Bible school.

Whether in a paid position or as volunteer, Diane's service to education, to her community, to young people, and to the wider community has been beyond price!

### **Club inducts new member at April meeting**

#### **Constance-Alexa Oulanoff**

Constance Oulanoff received her bachelor's degree from the University of Miami in 1962. She earned her master's degree from Vanderbilt University in 1963 with a major in Russian language and literature and a minor in German language and literature. She married, and the couple moved from Nashville to Columbus. When her second son entered school, she began an outstanding teaching career with Columbus City Schools.

Constance taught at Franklin Middle School from 1977-80 and at Columbus Alternative High School from 1980 until her retirement in 2007. She and her students were recipients of numerous awards for achievements in the

Russian and German languages. She received grants for foreign workshops and conferences in Paris, Moscow, and Berlin. In 1987, the U.S. Department of Education selected her as one of two teachers to lead 18 of the best American students of Russian on a six-week academic study tour through the U.S.S.R., the first such tour by either country. In 1995, Daimler-Benz and the Goethe Institute selected her German program as one of the 15 best in the U.S. and Canada.

Before she began her teaching career, Constance was active in the Ohio State University Women's Club. After retiring, she rejoined the club and served in a number of offices, including as president.



**Constance Oulanoff (left) and Dorothy Driskell, her sponsor.**

### **Nominating Committee offers slate of officers for 2018-19**

The Nominating Committee reported to the club's Board of Directors on March 1 that it will propose the following slate of nominees for 2018-19: Violet Meek as president-elect, and Deborah Stevens and Tom Davison as directors-at-large with terms ending in 2020. The report will be formally presented to the club's membership on May 3. Election of officers will be held at that time.

The following board members will continue in their current positions: Howard Gauthier as treasurer, Susan Tilgner as assistant treasurer, Thom Seelbach as secretary, Susan Warrener Smith as assistant secretary, and Dorothy Driskell and Richard Meyer as directors-at-large with terms ending in 2019.

The Nominating Committee is composed of Jeff Caswell, chair, Rich Davis, and Tom Costantiello.

## Responding to the Evite from Secretary Seelbach

Club secretary Thom Seelbach will send you via electronic mail an Evite to attend the Torch Club meeting on May 3. Respond promptly to the Evite so he will have an accurate count of meals needed. You also may respond to him at tseelbach@gmail.com or (614) 457-5103.

The directions for responding to the Evite are:

1. After you click on the email from Evite, it will bring up a new window on the Evite website. You must click your response in this new window for Evite to register your response.
2. The guest count is the actual number of attendees. If only you are attending, the count will be 1. The cost for a guest to attend the meeting and dinner is \$30.

## Schedule of Torch Club speakers and their papers for 2017-18

Thursday, October 5, 2017

**"History of the OSU College of Optometry"** by Robert Newcomb

Thursday, November 2, 2017

**"Cuba Then and Now: A Contemporary Perspective"** by Tricia Herban

Thursday, December 7, 2017

**Chamber Music Connection String Quartet**

Thursday, January 4, 2018

**"Sicily: So Much More"** by Christina Atzberger

Thursday, February 1, 2018

**"Antarctica, Past and Present"** by Thomas Baughman

Thursday, March 1, 2018

**"Improving Performance Using an Integrated Theory of Constraints, Six Sigma and Lean"** by Gordon Clark

Thursday, April 5, 2018

**"The Evolution of English Gardens"** by Nancy Verber

Thursday, May 3, 2018

**"Celebrating the Faculty Club Steinway Piano,"**  
a recital by Thomas Seelbach on the Faculty Club's restored piano

### **Torch Club's monthly meeting agenda**

4:30-5:30 p.m. Board of Directors meeting

5:30-6:15 p.m. Cocktails and conversation

6:15-6:35 p.m. Business matters

6:35-7:30 p.m. Speaker presents Torch paper

7:30-8:45 p.m. Dinner and table discussion

Meetings are conducted in The Ohio State University Faculty Club, 181 S. Oval Drive; (614) 292-2262.

## Board of Directors of Torch Club of Columbus, Ohio, for 2017-18

President – Rich Davis

President-elect – Tom Costantiello

Immediate Past President – Jeff Caswell

Secretary – Thom Seelbach

Assistant Secretary – Susan Warren Smith

Treasurer – Howard Gauthier

Assistant Treasurer – Susan Tilgner

Fellowship Chair – Violet Meek

Membership Chair – Dorothy Driskell

Nominating Chair – Jeff Caswell

Newsletter Editor – Steve Sterrett

Director-at-Large Violet Meek (2018)

Director-at-Large Deborah Stevens (2018)

Director-at-Large Dorothy Driskell (2019)

Director-at-Large Richard Meyer (2019)