



HIGHLAND  
COUNTY  
ARTS  
COUNCIL

HIGHLAND COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL // ISSUE 63 // FEBRUARY 2026

# NEWSLETTER



## Save the Date

### 66th Annual Maple Festival

Southern Rail Express  
March 14th, 2pm, at The Highland Center

Mill Creek Cronies  
March 21st, 2pm, at The Highland Center



We have two terrific bands lined up, for back to back weekends of entertainment! Be sure to mark your calendars, so you don't miss any of the festivities during the 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Maple Festival.

The Highlands Community Orchestra is gearing up for their Spring concert! Please see below, a letter, from Artistic Director of The Highlands Community Orchestra and President of The Highland County Arts Council, Gretta Sandberg.



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## Update on The Highlands Community Orchestra

Wonders never cease! More musicians are joining the Highlands Community Orchestra! I love that musicians are watching what the orchestra is doing and are getting excited about joining us for the joy of making music and the wonderful friendships that happen because of performing together! We have hit the magic number of thirty members!

The orchestra has expanded its concert venues to give all the musicians the opportunity to perform for their own communities! On December 7, the orchestra played a holiday concert at the Highland Center in Monterey in the afternoon, to a packed house, and then moved to Pocahontas County HS for an evening concert. In between the concerts, the orchestra had a potluck dinner provided by the members of the orchestra. We discovered that our musicians not only play their instruments very well but are fabulous cooks & bakers!

Here are some interesting facts about our cross-county and cross-state orchestra: there are 24 musicians from West Virginia and 6-8 musicians from Virginia (some Virginia musicians are still deciding). It breaks down to fourteen players from Pocahontas County, ten players from Pendleton County and six players from Highland County, with possibly two more players from Bath County. We have three Moms with their children (middle & high school) in the orchestra. So, not only are we a cross county/state orchestra, but also a cross generational orchestra!

In this year of 2026, to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our United States, I am featuring the immigrants who came to this country and brought their music with them. Music provides the vehicle for understanding the differences and the common ground that we all share. We don't even have to know another's native language to be able to play music together. As has been said many times, music is the universal language. Immigrants brought a wealth of music from their own cultures to mix with other cultures to form a distinct American Style. I hope that these concerts will highlight the genius of our immigrants' music and to show that music has always been there to facilitate the communication between peoples. We will explore some of these ideas this year!

If our concerts bring a little bit of joy to your life, we urge you to financially support the Highlands Community Orchestra. We want to continue to bring interesting concerts performed by your family members and neighbors, but we need your support. The orchestra is the only community orchestra in this entire area. Please help the orchestra continue to grow and to bring pleasure to many communities. The orchestra is sponsored by the Highland County Arts Council, which is a nonprofit organization supported by contributions from members, friends, community foundations, and government organizations.

Send contributions to: Highland County Arts Council, P.O. Box 175, Monterey, VA 24465. Please indicate on a separate enclosed note that this contribution is to go into funds to support the Highlands Community Orchestra. Thank you! Please, also become a member of the Highland County Arts Council, who bring so many wonderful opportunities to our area!

**UPCOMING CONCERT: SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 3:00 p.m. at the Highland Center  
Evening concert TBD. We will be featuring some unusual instruments and a few surprises!**

Saving the world, one musician at a time!  
Gretta Sandberg, Artistic Director, Highlands Community Orchestra

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**Without the support of the following organizations, the Highland County Arts Council would not be able to provide the programming that is its hallmark.**

The Virginia Commission for the Arts  
The Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge  
The Little Swiss Fund The Charles Pinckney Jones Foundation



# THANK YOU

The Highland County Arts Council is upgrading! We are excited to share our staging riser journey with you all. Please see an update from our Programming Chair, Galen Watts.



New Staging Risers

The Arts Council is replacing the decades-old staging platforms at the Highland Center. Two new platforms have been purchased for testing of suitability and will be delivered in late February.

These new platforms fold up, have transport wheels attached and can be positioned and unfolded without any lifting.

Once suitability is certain and as budget allows more new platforms will be purchased and the older, 160 lb. platforms that are very cumbersome and somewhat dangerous to handle will be phased out.

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# THANK YOU



Be sure to sign up for our newsletter, and follow our social media pages, so you don't miss the latest news, events and performances! To donate, simply scan the QR code, or follow the donation link.

We appreciate your generosity!



[Donation Link](#)

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