

Shapiro gift helps renovate Worcester concert hall in time for JOMPATHON



Tri-County Hardwood Floor Co. employees, from left, Frank Brunner, Raymond Lunt and Robert Koza, all of Worcester, install maple flooring at the Joy of Music Program's new auditorium in Worcester.
T&G Staff/Paul Kapteyn



Wendy and Richard Ardizzone, director and associate director of the Joy of Music Program, are seen in JOMP's new auditorium in Worcester, scheduled to be completed by the end of this month.
T&G Staff/Paul Kapteyn

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WORCESTER - There's a persuasive percussive beat being passed from generation to generation by the Shapiro family.

Joseph Shapiro (1898-1962), born in Russia but raised in Worcester, was a percussionist playing in many of the country's top bands and orchestras. His son, Dr. Jordan L. Shapiro, who was born in Worcester, was an optometrist but also played the drums professionally from the age of 16.

"My father got me started on drums," said Andrew Shapiro of Needham, son of Dr. Shapiro. "Now, my son is playing drums."

And something else with a pleasing musical theme is being passed along by the Shapiro family to students and faculty at the Joy of Music Program, 1 Gorham St., Worcester.

When the nonprofit community music school, best known as JOMP, holds its annual [JOMPATHON](#) marathon musical recital Jan. 30, it will be the occasion of the first performances in its new Joseph & Jordan Shapiro Concert Hall.

JOMP received a \$250,000 gift from the Jordan Shapiro Charitable Trust last year for the music school's concert hall project, which has expanded the width and seating, raised the ceiling, and made significant acoustic and other improvements to its former recital facility off Lincoln Street.

The gift came from a family that did not know of JOMP a year ago. On the other hand, Andrew Shapiro said of his father, "If he knew about it (JOMP), he would have donated to it."

"This is an amazing story," said Wendy Ardizzone, director of JOMP.

Andrew Shapiro said that after his father's death Feb. 9 at the age of 87, "we were looking for a good organization for people to donate to" that could be listed in Dr. Shapiro's obituary. The family also includes Dr. Shapiro's other children, Joseph Shapiro of Boston and Gail Shapiro of Santa Monica.

Andrew Shapiro's wife came across JOMP while doing an online search. The family contacted JOMP and liked what they learned. "We saw an organization he (Dr. Shapiro) would have been proud to be associated with," Mr. Shapiro said.

Memorial donations were soon arriving at JOMP's office. "We had an outpouring of gifts in his memory," Ms. Ardizzone said. "As the gifts came in we learned more about him."

Ms. Ardizzone and her husband, JOMP associate director Richard Ardizzone, stayed in touch with the Shapiro family. When a couple of family members paid a visit to JOMP in the spring, they took a tour and heard about the music school's plans to renovate and expand its recital hall.

Dr. Shapiro had established a charitable trust in his name, so his family decided make the \$250,000 gift to JOMP for the new concert hall, which has been named after Dr. Shapiro and his father.

Joseph Shapiro said "While it is an honor to have the concert hall named in memory of our father and grandfather, our primary interest is in supporting the Joy of Music Program."

"It worked out great and the place is beautiful," said Andrew Shapiro.

"My dad was very connected to Worcester. He liked to go back there. He enjoyed it when he was a kid," Andrew Shapiro said.

Dr. Shapiro moved with his family to Brookline and graduated from Brookline High School and the Massachusetts College of Optometry. He owned and operated the Vision Care Center at Coolidge Corner in Brookline for 51 years.

But music was always an important part of his life, Andrew Shapiro said.

"My grandfather was a percussionist. He played a complete array of percussion instruments. He was definitely my dad's driving force. To my father it translated to drums - no further. But he was very happy when he was doing that. It was something that led to friendships that lasted a lifetime."

Ms. Ardizzone said she was struck by a photo of Dr. Shapiro playing the drums that accompanied his obituary. "There's a sparkle in his eyes," she said.

JOMP's origins go back to 1986, when Ms. Ardizzone began offering music and movement courses for preschoolers in rented space at First Unitarian Church. At the beginning of the first year she had 12 students; at the end there were 50. Last year, JOMP had 565 students, from preschoolers to senior citizens, according to Mr. Ardizzone. The school offers a variety of music lessons and classes and has several performing ensembles.

In 2002, JOMP moved to its own home at 1 Gorham St. The building was a former nursing home. A 2011 fundraising campaign had three main objectives: fix the water drainage system, pay off the mortgage and renovate the recital hall. The first two goals have been met, while the concert hall project, at a total cost of \$900,000, is in the homestretch to cover extra expenses such as furnishing and staging.

As Ms. and Mr. Ardizzone were being interviewed recently, flooring was being installed in the concert hall.

The hall will seat 200 people. The old recital hall "could squeeze 100 people," Mr. Ardizzone said. "Not very comfortably; 80 comfortably," added Ms. Ardizzone. Sometimes performers would "literally be up against the opposite wall," she said.

The hall will be used for student and faculty recitals throughout the year and be available for other groups in the community at large, Mr. Ardizzone said.

The Jan. 30 JOMPATHON will be the school's 25th, as students take pledges to raise money for the school's financial aid fund.

"It's the perfect first event," Ms. Ardizzone said of the JOMPATHON performances in the concert hall that will be going on all day. "Our students and faculty are the inspiration behind the whole project."

Last year, 120 students received a total of \$136,000 in financial aid, Mr. Ardizzone said. JOMP hopes to raise \$145,000 for the financial aid fund this year, with \$10,000 coming from pledges to the JOMPATHON if all goes well. Financial aid is all "need-based ... It's at the heart of our mission," Ms. Ardizzone said.

There is no shortage of students wanting to perform in the new concert hall for the first time Jan. 30 , she said. The JOMPATHON is scheduled to run from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., but "we may be here 'til midnight," she said.

The Joseph & Jordan Shapiro Concert Hall will be formally dedicated May 7.

"In this time of budget cuts it's important to keep music alive," Andrew Shapiro said.