

JOMP continues New Year's Eve tradition

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WORCESTER — When it comes to Worcester New Year's Eve traditions, few happenings now can match the Joy of Music's involvement with Dec. 31.

The community music school (popularly known as JOMP) was part of First Night Worcester for many years, playing at different venues and settings from 1990 to 2016.

For the third year the Joy of Music Youth Orchestra will perform its annual New Year's Eve Concert at JOMP's own Joseph and Jordan Shapiro Concert Hall, 1 Gorham St. at 3 p.m. Tuesday. Timothy Terranella, conductor, and Regie Pineda, associate conductor, will lead the orchestra in playing selections from Schubert, Gliere, Boccherini, Haydn and and Ivanof Ippolitov. The concert is free.

First Night Worcester was a pretty joyful 35 year Worcester New Year's Eve

tradition, but the nonprofit organization shut down in early 2017 after a lengthy period of trying to cope with declining funding.

Joy of Music was founded in 1986 by its director Wendy Ardizzone and first participated in First Night in the Children's Parade carrying Joy of Music's banner and playing rhythm instruments, she said. Its first First Night concerts featured JOMP's world drumming, chamber music, and recorder ensembles, and from 1997 to 2016 the JOMP Youth Orchestra (formerly Chamber Orchestra) and Jazz ensembles.

Ardizzone said the most memorable New Year's Eve concert was First Night 2000 (Dec. 31 1999) in the aftermath of the tragic Dec. 3, 1999, warehouse fire.

"The kids asked if they could dedicate their performances to the six firefighters who had lost their lives only four weeks before," Ardizzone recalled. "They wrote a tribute themselves and the concertmaster read it to the audience."

Joy of Music did not consider dropping its Dec. 31 performance after the demise of First Night, Ardizzone said.

“A New Year’s Eve performance for the orchestra was such a longtime tradition, we were determined to continue. In spite of the sadness we all felt about no longer being part of the wonderful community event that First Night had been, we were excited about seeing if it would work to hold the concert right at Joy of Music in Joseph & Jordan Shapiro Concert Hall.”

The concert hall, the result of a \$250,000 gift from the Jordan Shapiro Charitable Trust, was dedicated in 2016.

“The kids were thrilled and we’ve had full houses each year. This will be the third year in Shapiro. There’s a wonderful feeling as the kids play that we’re celebrating both New Year’s Eve and the outpouring of community support that’s made it possible for our school to be in its own building with its own beautiful concert hall,” Ardizzone said.

New Year’s Eve celebrations — or in this case “Noon Year’s Eve” — are also a longstanding happening at the EcoTarium, 222 Harrington Way, and there will be lots of activities from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., including family-friendly countdowns at noon and 2 p.m.

Ice skating on the Worcester Common Oval has become part of the downtown New Year’s Eve scene, and will take place from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Plenty of clubs, bars and other venues will have their own unique take on New Year’s Eve at different events across the city this year.

For laughter, WooHaHa! Comedy Club presents its “New Year’s Eve Show” at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 31 at The Pavillion Theatre at the Beer Garden, 64 Franklin St. Featured comedians include Comedy Central’s Dan Boulger, as well as Kristine Blinn, Jimmy Cash and Brian Higginbottom. Meanwhile, The Comedy Attic, 257 Park Ave., will present Tim McIntire at 8 p.m.

The Muse, 536 Main St., will transform into a dance hall for an evening of fun, dancing to favorite 1980s tunes, and enjoying ’80s-themed cocktails. With a view to the new ’20s, A New Year’s Eve Gatsby Ball at Secret Atrium, 1 Exchange Place, will have music, burlesque and a champagne toast at midnight, and there’s also a Roaring ’20s New Year’s Eve Dance Party at Electric Haze, 124 Millbury St.

People nostalgic for First Night or who like a 20/20 view when planning out several activities might note that First Night Boston, established in 1975, is still celebrating the New Year and continues to be free and open to all. Entertainment and special attractions will be focused in Copley Square and Back Bay from 11:45 a.m. until midnight. For more information, visit www.firstnightboston.org.