

## Tuesday Musical Scholarship Competition: investing in the future

by Mike Telin



If you are looking for a good return on your investment, give scholarships to budding musicians to help them over the financial humps during their early careers. Since 1955, Akron's Tuesday Musical has been providing financial assistance through its Annual Scholarship Competition to College and

University music performance and education majors who are Ohio residents or studying with a music teacher at an Ohio institution.

Earlier this year Tuesday Musical announced that brothers Richard Zook and Douglas Zook Jr. had endowed a new prize for the Scholarship Competition with the creation of the Howard E. Leisinger Viola Prize in honor of their maternal grandfather.

Leisinger, who grew up on a farm near the Maryland-Pennsylvania line, began studying music privately with a neighbor when he was young. "I have only the haziest memory of my grandfather — he died when I was very young," Douglas Zook said by telephone from his home in Doylestown, Ohio. "The story I heard is that my grandfather's family, being practical farmers, weren't particularly supportive, but he continued."

Although Leisinger never had a formal music education, he took to music and eventually gravitated to the viola. In addition to teaching privately, he led the orchestra at Mercersburg Academy. "He also led the Boys Band at the Tressler Orphans Home, and back in those days — that would have been the early '20s — they did a summer tour around the region and they were very popular," Douglas Zook said. "I even have his old band director's uniform."

After moving to Akron in the mid '20s, Leisinger found himself in the insurance business but continued to teach and play in local ensembles. "He played viola in the Akron and Canton Symphonies, and for a while conducted the old Akron Doctors Orchestra. He also led The Leisingers' Concert Orchestra — I have a photograph from 1939 that was taken in the old Main Street Methodist Church. When I showed it to my mom, she said, 'Oh yeah, I played in that— I'm in that picture.' She pointed to herself and I said, 'Yup, that's my mom as a teenager,'" Douglas Zook recalled.

An accomplished woodworker, Leisinger also made string instruments, including the viola that he played. "I remember as a boy when I would visit my grandmother, in one of the bedroom closets was a cello that he had made."

How did the brothers come to the decision to create a scholarship for Tuesday Musical? "Growing up, I was involved with Tuesday Musical's Brahms and Allegro Clubs," Richard Zook said during a telephone conversation from his home in Zaandam, Netherlands. "I also attended Tuesday Musical concerts as a kid, and when I was a voice student at the University of Akron. Of course, all my teachers were members of Tuesday Musical, so it was something that I was very much aware of."

After Richard Zook moved to the Netherlands to pursue a career as a professional singer in Nederlands Kamerkoor as well as other choral ensembles, his parents became Tuesday Musical season subscribers. Douglas is also a subscriber and member of TMA.

After their parents passed away, the brothers began talking about how to memorialize them. "You always see memorials in programs," Richard Zook said. "When mom and I would go to Blossom, we noticed the plaques on the backs of seats, and she'd always comment on how nice it was that people did that."

Because Tuesday Musical was an important part of both brothers' lives, they first discussed the possibility of making a donation to the Scholarship Program, but the conversation quickly moved to the topic of funding a prize. "The ball rolled from there," Richard Zook said, "but the question was, if we created a prize, what would we like it to be?"

Douglas Zook noted that Tuesday Musical's Scholarship Program has many categories and multiple awards within those categories. "One of the goals that my brother and I had was to expand on the number of scholarships. We knew that the category for strings was just that, and violinists, violists, cellists, and bassists were all competing for the same prizes."

During their conversations with TMA, they were told that far fewer violists enter the competition each year than violins and cellists. “It was explained that violists are always up against the virtuoso violinists and cellists. And the repertoire for solo viola is certainly not as broad. My brother and I thought, ‘Let’s see if TMA might be interested in awarding a special viola prize’ — so we did, and they were agreeable.”

Douglas Zook said he was happy to find out that when the 2020 scholarship applications opened, the first player to apply was a violist. By the time the applications closed, there were six entries. “That was one of our goals — to increase viola participation.”

*To help protect everyone’s safety as the world responds to the COVID-19 crisis, Tuesday Musical’s 2020 Scholarship Competition on Saturday, May 16, 2020 has been canceled.*

*The 2021 Scholarship Competition is set for Saturday, March 20, 2021 in Akron. Online applications will be accepted [here](#) from January 1 through February 1, 2021.*

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