

STUDENT RENTALS TURN MISSION HILL HOUSES INTO DEVELOPER ATMs

BY ALISON PULTINAS

The most recent data from the Department of Neighborhood Development's annual report, *Student Housing Trends*, confirms that Mission Hill and Fenway/Kenmore are the city neighborhoods with the greatest number of undergraduate and graduate students living off campus. According to a Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) publication, *Boston by the Numbers*, the neighborhoods have a low percentage of owner-occupants,

Typically when converting housing to accommodate students, a developer purchases a property for a high price, then to maximize their return, often adds another floor, converts dining rooms and front parlors to bedrooms, or builds an addition that doubles or triples the original size. Some examples include 813 Parker St. and 72 and 76 Alleghany St.

The Alleghany Street units were architecturally distinctive Greek Revival style homes on land with deep backyards. Then, developer Joseph LaRosa combined the lots,

built three-story additions to both properties, and converted the front lawns from grass to AstroTurf. No zoning variances were required. His properties in Mission Hill and Roxbury are held by various trusts and limited liability corporations (LLCs). Since his death in March, his wife Mary LaRosa has managed the companies.

Similarly, the large house at 813 Parker St. is getting a three-story addition. The property is part of what neighbor Kara Verrochi calls "fraternity row," houses bought by Alex Peselman and Mark Lepler, currently the most active developers in the Mission Hill student rental market. Their company, Mission Capital Group, is located at 39 Brighton Ave.

Peselman's business holdings, however, aren't limited to Mission Capital Group. His LLCs fill eight pages on State Secretary William Galvin's corporate database. According to the firm's website, "at

Mission Capital we understand the demand of the market we develop for... most of these [tenants] come from upper-middle class families and are accustomed to a certain grade of living. Unfortunately, a lot of the buildings

Spring Ritual: The Fens in Flames

PHOTO: NANCY AHMADIFAR



As reliably as forsythia and daffodils, fires in the phragmites have become a sign of spring. This year the flames—possibly set off by homeless people who use the dense stands for encampments—broke out on March 28. They consumed the dried-out plant material on the entire west bank of the river between Boylston Street and Agassiz Road.

in the neighborhood are in ill repair, lack modern comforts ..."

Peselman and Lepler attended the March meeting of the Community Alliance of Mission Hill; Peselman sat in the audience while Lepler and their architect Peter Vanko described a proposal for replacing a 19th-century house at 42 Wait St. They presented a Hobson's Choice, explaining that they have permits to build three five-bedroom apartments that will undoubtedly be filled with students, or the community could allow them a variance and they'll agree to create seven smaller units with seven parking spaces, signing an agreement for no undergraduates and doing their best to save the large backyard tree.

At the Alliance meeting, Lepler said "we hold what we buy," implying that they do not intend to flip their properties. The group asked the developers to consider seven condos instead of rentals if the economics work. The 42 Wait St. vote will be in May, so the developers have time to study and compare the financials for condos versus rentals.

The Mission Hill review process for small building projects requiring zoning variances includes an abutters' sidewalk meeting with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services representative, and presentations at the Community Alliance of Mission Hill and the

Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services Project Review Committee.

Following meetings with the Neighborhood Housing Services Project Review Committee, several projects have agreed not to allow undergraduates on the leases. However, no city officials are involved with these agreements. Developers willingly make these promises, but without penalties, is it just a goodwill gesture?

Even when the City is involved, promises like the unwieldy "No More Than Four" Boston student housing rule has proved unenforceable by Inspectional Services and is considered possibly illegal.

Residents who attend project-review meetings often speak emotionally about the decline of home ownership in the neighborhood. If condominiums are proposed, they will advocate for deed restrictions for owner occupancy in the sale agreements. However, there is often pushback from investors and their attorneys, as mortgage banks dislike deed restrictions. The residents also believe that student tenants bring down the value of adjacent property and quality of life, citing late night rooftop parties, trash, and noise as evidence.

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PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS



Upper: 42 Wait St., will be torn down and redeveloped by the Mission Capital Group. Bottom: Construction at 813 Parker St.

approximately 10 percent. The communities experience development pressures and construction impacts from Boston's economic boom. However, residential real estate in the two neighborhoods is quite different.

Like the Fenway, Mission Hill includes masonry rowhouses, larger apartment complexes and affordable housing developments. But the top of the hill is primarily two- and three-family structures with a dwindling number of single-family homes. The wood-frame multi-family units built before 1930, some as early as the mid-19th century, experience the highest number of student housing conversions.

CIVIC AGENDA

Tuesday, 5/21: District 8 City Council Candidates Debate

Four candidates running for the soon-to-be-vacant District 8 City Council seat will debate in a "community conversation" at Berklee's 160 Mass. Ave. dorm. Former Lesley University president Margaret McKenna will moderate the discussion with Kenzie Bok, Landon Lamoine, Kristen Mobilia, and Helène Vincent. Doors open at 6pm, program begins at 6:30. Visit bit.ly/BostonD8Forum for tickets, which are required. Sponsored by Ward 4 and Ward 5 Democrats, the Fenway CDC, Fenway Civic, MassVOTE, and other groups.

Students Turn to Off-Campus and Peer-Based Care

EDITORS NOTE: This is the second in a two-part series on mental health on college campuses. The first article focused on issues with mental health services. This story highlights solutions both on- and off-campus.

BY JULIA HARRINGTON

For students who want to attend regular counseling, Fenway Health is an option.

The center was founded by Northeastern students in 1971, and while it focuses on LGBT health, it also offers traditional therapy, group psychotherapy, and support groups regardless of the patient's ability to pay.

According to its "2018 At A Glance" web page, the Fenway Health Behavioral Health department cared for 4,200 people who made more than 36,400 individual therapy, group therapy, and psychopharmacology appointments.

David Todisco, a trained social worker and the acting Director of Behavioral Health at Fenway Health, says that the majority of those

patients are in the college age range, or as he says, are in a "transitional stage in life."

Though Todisco says the wait time for an appointment can be up to a few weeks, Fenway Health offers consistent care and support, as the center has well over 25 practicing behavioral health specialists.

"There has always been a supply-and-demand challenge. The need for behavioral health services is greater than what is available in the area, it seems," Todisco said.

Many mental health centers face similar struggles, but Todisco encourages and commends people who seek help. He recommends students learn to notice signs of mental illness in themselves and act on them.

"It's not a sign of weakness, it's a sign of courage and strength to ask for help," he said. "People do recover from mental health issues. This won't last forever."

Another alternative for students struggling with mental health

challenges is off-campus peer counseling, such as the Metro Boston Recovery Learning Community. Howard Trachtman, co-founder of the group, experienced his own mental health struggles and now works to help others.

He attended both Northeastern and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and now regularly speaks at universities in the area. He shares his own recovery story and advocates for the learning community, which has five centers, including one in the South End, and a hotline available.

"Too many people are going away to colleges, and they might not have the independent living skills" they need, he said. "They might not have the ability to adapt to a new environment like that."

Trachtman believes that peer groups offer a safe space to speak about personal challenges and hear from others going through similar things. He says that opening up the conversation is a good first step

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to help others understand mental illness.

Emmanuel College senior Maria George met Trachtman through support groups and is working on a capstone project about mental healthcare on college campuses and is shadowing at the learning community.

She says that college is a stressful time for students and that universities cannot always serve the needs of their students. She thinks that wait times and long intervals between appointments push students to get help off-campus.

George appreciates hearing people's stories because they let her know that she is not alone and they help to deconstruct the internalized stigma surrounding mental illness.

"It fosters a sense of belonging which is what the college student age group- they just want to belong," she said.

This is what Northeastern's chapter of Active Minds is hoping to achieve through weekly meetings and campus-wide events. The small but active group has very fluid membership and had 13 members at their last meeting, where they discussed the mental health challenges that surface around the holiday season.

Though they are an independent club and aren't funded by the university, they've tried to coordinate events with UHCS, but vice president Sarah Williams says

they have been rather unresponsive.

Williams, a fourth-year student, joined Active Minds her freshman year after starting a mental health club at her high school. As vice president, she hopes to increase student involvement and hopes to continue creating a safe, stigma-free environment for anyone to talk about mental health when the universities facilities are not enough.

"There's just this kind of taboo as soon as someone mentions mental health everyone gets quiet and no one wants to talk about it," she said. "So just to be the person who starts the conversation."

The group is working to create a required mental health workshop during freshman orientation to inform new students about the resources that Northeastern has and teach them how to recognize signs of mental health challenges in themselves and their peers. They hope that this will help to change the conversation surrounding mental health.

The president of the club, Rose McDermott, adds that "It's important to know too that everybody has mental health so that the word mental health doesn't become mental illness and then therefore stigmatized. We want them to know that no matter who you are or what you have, you have mental health, just like your physical health."

Julia Harrington is a journalism student at Northeastern University.

Tatte Will Open On Mass. Ave.



Tatte, the rapidly expanding Israeli-inspired bakery and cafe, will open a location in the former B3 space in Berklee's 160 Mass. Ave. dorm this summer. Across the street and up a block, the Mass Ave. branch of B.GOOD has closed.

Volunteer-Driven FriendshipWorks Supports Seniors, Enriches Lives

BY MARY ANN BROGAN

FriendshipWorks is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing "social isolation, enhancing quality of life, and preserving the dignity of older adults."

In 1984, it was initially founded as Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers, a network of religious congregations and social service agencies. Throughout FriendshipWork's development and expansion, it has remained constant in its mission and serves as a replicable model for 1,300 similar programs nationwide. As of this year, FriendshipWorks has served over 23,400 elders in Boston and Brookline, providing more than 500,000 hours of donated care. Over the years, FriendshipWorks has won multiple awards, mostly recently the 2018 In Good Company Optimal Aging Challenge.

In 2016, FriendshipWorks held its first annual Walk-a-Thon. The next one will take place on May 19.

The driving force behind every program FriendshipWorks sponsors is its volunteers, who range from 18 to 74 years old. The philosophy is that "one cannot be too young to have old friends nor too old to have young friends," said Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, executive director of FriendshipWorks. "There are some volunteers who have been with an elder for 20 years," she added.

FriendshipWorks coordinators match up every volunteer to a recipient of services, taking into account interests or needs, interaction style, and location. Volunteers for this program commit themselves for one year.

"It's all about trust. I visit the Peterborough Senior Center frequently and work closely with Tracey Hunt, community coordinator for the center. They know me...having a relationship with a neighborhood and its people helps a potential recipient of services to trust and accept help," explained Bryan Perkins, Friendly Visiting program coordinator for the Fenway and Mission Hill. In addition to the Senior Center, he also frequently visits the Susan S. Bailis Assisted Living facility.

FriendshipWorks offers a range of services, including the Friendly Visiting program, which matches volunteers with elderly individuals who would like someone to visit them on a weekly basis; the Medical Escort program, which helps seniors navigate the complex medical system; and Music Works, which focuses on connecting through the elder's favorite music. Other services include Walking Buddies, Pet Pals, and Relaxing through the Arts.

Through Friendly Visiting, a visit might include a brief chat over a meal, walking, listening to music or help with light chores.

Perkins, gives the example of Vicky, a woman in her 60s with limited mobility due to cerebral palsy, who has worked with FriendshipWorks since 2002. The Friendly Visiting volunteer helps with her collage art.

Janet is a 94-year-old with impaired hearing, low vision, and mobility issues. She recently moved to a nursing home and continues to be visited by Sarah, who has worked with her for several years. Something as simple as making sure a hearing aid has batteries can make all the difference.

In addition to coordinating volunteer efforts, Perkins also collaborates with Hunt at the Senior Center to bring in special speakers. A student intern works with Hunt under the supervision of Perkins and the rest of the FriendshipWorks team. Many of the elders from the center have received technical services to set up a computer in the home. Helping an elder set up a computer at home can promote a path to decreasing isolation on an elder's own terms.

Seckel-Cerrotti explained that in addition to continuing their current programs and collaboration with the Senior Center, FriendshipWorks would like to focus on seniors with low vision and the needs of the LGBTQ community. Projects on intergenerational storytelling are also in development.

All FriendshipWorks services are free, and there is no income eligibility. Anyone can call or make a referral. For more information, call (617) 485-1510 or visit to www.fw4elders.org.

Mary Ann Brogan lives in the East Fens.

COMMUNITY meetings

WED, MAY 8 Public meeting on the proposal for 560-574 Commonwealth Avenue, a 27-story hotel surrounded by an approximately half-acre public plaza. The project includes the demolition of the existing building at 560-574 Comm. Ave. and shifting the building site east. 6-8pm. 610 Commonwealth Ave., 1st floor.

SAT, MAY 11 The Boston Ward 4 Democratic Committee hosts its caucus to elect delegates to the state Democratic Party convention in Springfield in September. Doors open at 10:30am. All registered Democrats in Ward 4 (which includes parts of the Back Bay, Fenway, and South End) are welcome. Questions? Email ward4dems@gmail.com. South End Library, 11am.

MON, MAY 13 Community Dinner at Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, 165 Park Drive, 6pm to 7:30pm.

TUE, MAY 14 The Neighborhood Coffee Hours

give residents the opportunity to speak directly with Mayor Walsh and staff from City departments about open space and other needs in their neighborhoods. 9:30am to 10:30am, Symphony Park, 39 Edgerly Rd.

WED, MAY 15 & MAY 29 Fenway Fair Foods, 3-5pm, Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, 165 Park Drive. Get a bag of fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables for \$2. Everyone welcome! To learn more, contact Helen Murphy, hmurphy@fenwaycdc.org, 617- 267- 4637 x21

TUE, MAY 21 Meet the candidates for Boston City Council District 8. This will be a panel discussion moderated by Margaret McKenna, president emerita of Lesley University. All four declared candidates have confirmed their participation. Doors open at 6pm; the event starts at 6:30pm. Reserve your ticket in advance at bit.ly/BostonD8Forum. 160 Mass. Ave.

IN MEMORIAM

Barbara K. Boger

BY BILL KLAUER

East Fens resident Barbara Boger died recently at her residence on Hemenway Street, where she'd lived for several decades.

Born in Arlington in 1926, she moved with her family to a farm in Bolton where the family raised cows, chickens, and sheep and ran a roadside vegetable stand.

Barbara graduated from high school ranked number one in her class. She was awarded a full scholarship to Boston University. Following graduation, she secured a position with H.P. Hood in the advertising department and supplemented her income by writing both poetry and stories for several publications. She also assisted her mother, who worked at home addressing envelopes for an advertising agency.

She married Ed Sissman during her senior year at BU. They had mutual interests that included camping, photography, hiking, mountain climbing, and horseback riding. Over time, their interests changed and they divorced.

She married Eli Boger in 1962 and they settled in Brookline. He was a chemist specializing in cancer research. She then returned to college to become a social worker and found her second career both challenging and rewarding. Her husband died of cancer in 1982, and she moved to Hemenway Street, where she found herself much more in harmony with her surroundings.

Following her retirement in 1991, Barbara pursued her third career of helping senior citizens in the Back Bay. She joined the Peterborough Senior Center, the Beacon Hill Village Association, and the Older Women's League.

Bill Klauer is Barbara Boger's cousin.



S O X B O X

Fri, May 10	7:10pm	Sat, May 18	7:15pm
Sat, May 11	1:05pm	Sun, May 19	1:05pm
Sun, May 12	1:05pm	Mon, May 27	4:05pm
Tue, May 14	7:10pm	Tue, May 28	7:10pm
Wed, May 15	7:10pm	Wed, May 29	7:10pm
Fri, May 17	7:10pm		

A busy month for community meetings.

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

BOYLSTON STREET DISPENSARY

Several marijuana dispensaries are vying to be the first to open in Boston. MedMen wants to open at 120 Brookline Ave. in a building owned by Samuels and Associates. Another company has proposed a location at 601 Newbury St. Extension near Kenmore Square.

Now a candidate has applied for a coveted license. Cypress Tree Management (CTM) wants to open its dispensary in the current Little Steve's Pizzeria space in a busy block of restaurants and outdoor cafes on Boylston Street. The pizzeria is slated to close this year after more than 50 years in business.

In a public meeting on April 9, CTM outlined its plan to take over the first two floors and the basement of the Little Stevie's space for a total of 6,000 square feet. Spokesperson Todd Finard, CEO of Finard Properties, insisted that the large space ensures that there will be no lines outside on the sidewalk. He also said that CTM will have an express checkout line, a checkout line for handicapped customers, and that customers can order ahead online. Jay Youmans, an attorney representing CTM, added that the product will be sold in childproof packaging per state law.

Finard said that all the owners of CTM, including Eric Liebman, one of the founders of nearby Boloco, have Boston ties and either live or work in Boston. He said that his team chose the proposed location because of its accessibility to the MBTA Green Line, bus lines, parking, and heavy foot traffic.

Members of the audience expressed doubt (and irritation) about the location on a busy block. Tim Horn from Fenway

Civic said, "This is not an appropriate place for this. We got rid of a liquor store on this block. Moving out the liquor store changed the feeling and vibrancy of the block. This disrespects all the work in zoning that we have done."

Several clergymen from St. Clement Eucharistic Shrine, located at 1105 Boylston St., diagonally across from the proposed dispensary, expressed concern about public smoking. One resident said, "In the summer, every day, I have to close my window due to marijuana smoking." Residents think a dispensary would increase the problem.

Marie Fukuda, who lives in the East Fens, also expressed concern about public smoking in the Victory Gardens and Symphony Park. Other residents pointed out that the sidewalks are narrow and there are already problems with crowds and foot traffic.

Residents also expressed frustration with the process itself. Even though marijuana dispensaries are not allowed within half a mile of each other, some of the proposed sites are, in fact, closer than half a mile to each other.

Yissel Guerrero, of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services, explained that every applicant is given the opportunity to proceed, and each will still have to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals. She added that the Cannabis Control Commission has made every dispensary license conditional.

Since the process involves an agreement with the Mayor's office, then Zoning Board approval, then state regulators, local residents are wondering if they even have a voice in decisions that affect their neighborhood.

FENWAY CDC ANNUAL MEETING

On March 28, its 46th anniversary, the Fenway Community Development Corporation held its annual meeting at Fenway Community Health.

Executive Director Leah Camhi outlined the organization's accomplishments in 2018, including preservation of 97 affordable homes at the Newcastle-Saranac complex on Columbus Ave., the popular Porchfest event, and the successful citywide Airbnb reform. In addition, the CDC held eight tenant organizing meetings and two career fairs. They assisted in distributing 2,914 bags of fresh produce through Fenway Fair Foods, and Taste of the Fenway featured 33 restaurants and businesses, attracting more than 600 visitors. During her speech, Camhi announced that CDC memberships are now free.

Community service awards were presented to Eric Daniel, a volunteer and member of the Urban Village committee; Kevin Matos, who supervises the custodial staff at the Fenway Properties; James Smith, a West Fens resident who manages the Peterborough food pantry program; and Danisha Reddick, a CDC and Fenway Family Coalition volunteer.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of the Joyce Foster Community Impact Award to former State Representative Byron Rushing. A lifelong activist, Rushing was lauded for his 35 years of service as a representative of the South End and parts of the Fenway, Back Bay, and Roxbury.

Among Rushing's many accomplishments are past presidency of the Museum of African American History; his role as an original sponsor of the state's gay rights bill; and his role as chief sponsor of the law to

end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in public schools. He also led the Commonwealth's anti-apartheid efforts and was chief sponsor of the health reform law. In a characteristically lively acceptance speech, Rushing advocated for affordable housing, declared, "we can



Former Rep. Byron Rushing addresses the Fenway CDC annual meeting after receiving the Joyce Foster Community Impact Award.

have public transportation free to all," and asked audience members to be "vigilant" and "committed."

After Rushing's rousing speech, the keynote speakers had a tough act to follow. Doctors Gina Vild and Sanjiv Chopra, both from Harvard Medical School, discussed the principles of their book *Finding Purpose and Living a Happier, Healthier Life*. The two authors said that happy people radiate happiness and that to be happy, you need to live a life of purpose. They cited statistics showing that happiness cuts coronary disease in half and lowers blood pressure, and that happy people have more friends and honor the connectedness of life.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FENWAY CDC



Public Meeting

560-574 Commonwealth Ave

Wednesday, May 8
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

610 Commonwealth Avenue
Rajen Kilachand Center for Integrated
Life Sciences & Engineering, Room 101
Boston, MA 02215

Project Proponent:
Mark Kenmore LLC

Project Description:

The Proposed Project consists of demolishing the existing commercial building at 560-574 Commonwealth Avenue, construction a new, 27-story, approximately 389-room hotel, reconfiguring public ways in and around the project site, and creating an approximately 21,000 square foot tree-lined public plaza to be owned by the City.

mail to: **Tim Czerwiński**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.918.5303
email: tim.czerwiński@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
7/6/2019

BostonPlans.org | @BostonPlans
Teresa Polhemus, Executive Director/Secretary

EMERALD NECKLACE CONSERVANCY ANNUAL MEETING

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy, now in its 20th year, held its annual meeting April 8 at Simmons College.

President Karen Mauney-Brodek outlined the Conservancy's achievements of 2018, which included its collaboration with artist Fujika Nakaya to create "Fog x FLO." The innovative fog sculptures were installed at eight sites throughout the Emerald Necklace from August to October, including Clemente Field in the Fenway. More than 200 dance, music, and storytelling performances enhanced the installation, which Mauney-Brodek said brought visibility and visitors to the Emerald Necklace.

Other 2018 highlights included outdoor yoga sessions, movie nights, concerts, and a concert by the Boston Pops at Franklin Park. The Olmsted Tree Society accomplished its goal of going park by park pruning, removing, and replacing trees to keep the canopy healthy. In addition, changes were made to the Conservancy's headquarters in the Fenway, including new public restrooms.

For 2019, Mauney-Brodek promised to improve access to Charlesgate and the Arborway; introduce bike tours of the Emerald Necklace and movies at Charlesgate; install a new butterfly garden in the Victory Gardens; and make a concerted effort to remove the phragmites as part of the Muddy River Restoration Project.

The keynote address was given by a panel of four experts who discussed the impact of parks on human health. Northeastern University architecture professor Sara Jensen Carr shared her research on Frederick Law Olmsted, noting that the interest in nature as a purifier stemmed from the city's 1873 cholera epidemic. Doctors in the 1870s were starting to believe that fresh air and trees could positively affect health. As Olmsted stated at the time, "air is disinfected by sunlight and foliage."

Angela Cleveland, director of Sustainability Planning at Kim Lundgren Associates, spoke about a Health Impact Assessment, which was conducted in Lawrence and discussed the environmental and economic benefits of planting street trees. Finally, Wendy Heiger-Bernays, a clinical professor of public health at Boston University, and Nora Moreno Cargie, vice president of corporate citizenship at Tufts Health Plan, focused on the role that the environment plays in mitigating or improving health.

PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS



The under-construction 61 Heath St. General Heath Square apartments, 47 deed restricted units being developed by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp. and the Back of the Hill CDC.

> **MISSION HILL** from page 1
 Mitch Wilson, who recently built 18 rental units at 1467 Tremont St. and partnered with Jason Savage on the 66 apartments at 1486 Tremont St., claims there's no market for ownership in Mission Hill.

Wilson's controversial proposal for 9-11 Burney St. received pushback last year from Delle Avenue residents because of zoning violations. A revised plan shows micro-sized apartments and reduced height. The BPDA scheduled a public meeting for April 29; Tim Czerwinski is the project manager.

In the last three years, 563 new apartments were built in Mission Hill. With the exception of the 83 condominium units in the Mosaic building on Fenwood Road, all are rentals.

Metrics for the latest development projects tilt decidedly towards rentals, with eight separate projects adding 405 apartments in 2019 and 2020. However, there are 25 condos planned for infill parcels owned by the Department of Neighborhood Development, including Terrace Bravo LLC's planned 13 deed-restricted artist-loft condominiums on Terrace Street that recently received \$927,500 in Community Preservation Act funding. At their April 10 meeting, the Public Facilities Commissioners voted to convey the land for

just \$200. The developers are 2018 Harvard Graduate School of Design graduates Kirby Lui, Wyatt Komarin, and Jenny Shen.

Current residential construction on Tremont Street includes:

- Mission Hill Flats, a 40-rental-unit project, originally submitted as a Passive House project by Leland and Suzanne DiMeco and now owned by zoning attorney Patrick Mahoney. (Passive House structures combine extreme levels of insulation, renewable-energy generation, and other energy-saving features in order to reduce their demand for energy from the conventional power grid—often by 90 to 100 percent).
- Jason Savage's major alterations to the puddingstone workers cottages at Sewall Street and Tremont Street. A five-story addition looms over the propped-up stone facades. However, nothing is happening yet at the Savage-owned former David O'Connor funeral home at 1558 Tremont St., vacant now for decades.
- Phase 2 of the Parcel 25 Roxbury Crossing planned development area project. The 43 deed-restricted rentals are expected to be approved by the Boston Civic Design Commission in May. Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services previewed

Big Gifts Boost Arts Academy

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY



On April 4, the Boston Arts Academy Foundation announced two gifts totaling \$1 million to support the school, which has temporarily relocated to Dorchester while the City rebuilds its Ipswich Street facility. Mayor Martin J. Walsh hosted a formal presentation of the gifts—\$500,000 each from philanthropist Donna Harris-Lewis and the Lewis family, and a second \$500,000 from an anonymous donor—at the Parkman House. From left to right: Mayor Walsh; Donna Harris-Lewis; Anne Clark, Boston Arts Academy headmaster; Denella Clark, Boston Arts Academy Foundation president; Reggie Lewis, Jr.; and Lee Pelton, chair of the BAA Foundation board.

renderings at their annual meeting. Some state funding is anticipated.

There is still more to come. The nonprofit housing group Roxbury Tenants of Harvard owns vacant land at 761 to 773 Huntington Ave. and its membership will vote on a proposed development scenario. Two designs were recently shared with residents, either a five- to six-story or 12- to 16-story apartment building. Also, the Oliver Lofts on Terrace Streets is potentially building 50 condos on its surface parking lot, but the project has not been filed yet with the city.

While rental construction is booming, commercial properties on Tremont Street owned by Gerald Fabiano have been vacant for quite some time. Todd Datz at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health confirmed that the school is consolidating its

operations and terminated a lease at 1629 to 1639 Tremont St. last year. Across the street from Mission Church is another former HSPH office building owned by Fabiano. The shades are drawn, and windows tagged with graffiti.

An April 21 *Boston Globe Magazine* story by Jon Gorey and Lillian Millman, "Top Spots to Live," offered this memorable statistic: "... the fastest five-year growth in the city happened in condo-heavy Mission Hill." The authors said that sales data for condominiums comparing 2013 prices to 2018 showed a jump of 79 percent. Was "condo-heavy" wishful thinking? The actual numbers don't support the description. The neighborhood groups want more owner occupants; will City Hall be an advocate?

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

JOB SEARCH

REAL ESTATE DIRECTOR

Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC) seeks an entrepreneurial and experienced Real Estate Director to lead our affordable housing development and related real estate preservation activities.

Fenway CDC owns 409 units of rental housing and have developed additional homeownership and other properties. We are preserving 148 units and aggressively pursuing new development opportunities.

Our Real Estate Director will bring at least five years of work in affordable housing development or related real estate development or finance, and a passion for community-based development. Submit your cover letter and resume to <http://annlsilverman.com/real-estate-director-fenway-cdc/>. Visit www.fenwaycdc.org for more information.

JOB SEARCH

ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT PART-TIME

Fenway CDC seeks a reliable part-time Accounting Assistant to work with our part-time Director of Finance & Administration. The ideal candidate will be capable of learning our systems

quickly; be organized; pay strong attention to detail; and have good time-management skills. Available to work 12-16 hours/week (2-3 days/week on Monday, Wednesday or Friday).

Candidates should have two-plus years' accounting/bookkeeping experience or equivalent college-level accounting education. Send your cover letter and resume to: mreinstei@fenwaycdc.org. Visit www.fenwaycdc.org/careers for a full job description.



FENWAY CDC SEEKS A DIVERSE POOL OF CANDIDATES AND IS COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY.



CELEBRATE AND HONOR ASIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE

CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY WITH RAYNA LO
May 16 & June 20, 2019 | 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Free Chinese calligraphy sessions! Practice writing the characters for your favorite dim sum dishes using traditional Chinese tools.

FILM SCREENING: "THERMAE ROMAEE"

In partnership with the Japan Society of Boston and the Consulate General of Japan in Boston

June 5, 2019 | 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Join us for a screening of *Thermae Romae* (subtitled in English), an adaptation of Mari Yamazaki's popular manga of the same name. The story follows the adventure of Lucius, a Roman architect, who is criticized for his "outdated" thermae designs until he discovers a tunnel that leads him to a modern Japanese

Free and open to the public!

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THE SERIES IS PRESENTED BY:



FENSVIEWS

Equity Goes AWOL in Legal Cannabis Rollout

BY MAGGIE KINSELLA

The Massachusetts Cannabis Reform Coalition has been educating the public for 30 years on rational policy surrounding all uses of the cannabis plant, but there is still stigma and racial disparity blatantly lingering in the process. From our perspective, it is difficult to watch the arduous roll-out of Massachusetts' legal cannabis industry, particularly when it comes to two issues: buffer zones and social equity.

While the Cannabis Control Commission works to slowly open the door to Economic Empowerment and Social Equity Applicants, wealthy corporate operators and local officials continue to stomp out small businesses. In the final hour, after resources and money are spent and promises are made, cities and towns choose their mandatory minimum number of establishments and walk away hand in hand with big business, leaving smaller local entrepreneurs in limbo. This seems to be a common theme in Massachusetts.

With Community Host Agreements establishing local tax payments of more than three percent, which can be a burden to small businesses, equity has been kicked to the bottom of the priority list. Economic Empowerment Applicants are forced to compete with excessive barriers. Add in realtors who are increasing the price per square foot for cannabis businesses. It might be business as usual, but it is counterproductive and hurting economic growth, especially in areas of disproportionate impact.

In Boston, social equity became a priority discussion in City

Council meetings. Because the city's required buffer zones between dispensaries are so large, not all applicants will be selected. So who gets approved? Despite some backlash for poor communication, Boston is looking at its options, instead of just selecting businesses who are first to complete all the steps.

If we had our way, each local business could open, even near each other. A half-mile buffer zone is limiting for Boston, but it is what they chose to begin with. We hope to see buffer zones relaxed as soon as possible. If Boston has to choose because of this, local Economic Empowerment Applicants and Social Equity Applicants must receive priority.

About 10 business have Host Community Agreements with the City of Boston, but not one Economic Empowerment Applicant has yet reached that stage. City Councilor Kim Janey and organizations like the Massachusetts Recreational Consumer Council have worked with the City to ensure that social equity receives priority. We hope to see the City continue to choose local and set a precedent for other cities and towns by choosing Economic Empowerment and Social Equity Applicants.

The City's website contains more information, including details on upcoming community outreach meetings for proposed establishments, the process for setting up a business in the City, and accepted community host agreements.

Let's keep educating municipalities and keep pushing for equity. *Maggie Kinsella is press secretary for the Massachusetts Cannabis Reform Coalition.*

GUEST OPINION

Northeastern Stalls Instead of Letting Faculty Vote

BY SEBASTIAN STOCKMAN

For more than a year, a group of Northeastern University's full-time, non-tenure-track faculty has been working to form a union. The administration has blocked us at every turn.

Last fall, we filed a petition for a union election—collecting enough cards to trigger a vote overseen by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)—in which non-tenure-track professors could choose whether or not to be represented by a union. In the

Boston area, full-time faculty unions already exist at Tufts

University, Boston University, and Lesley University. They can also be found at prestigious private institutions nationwide, from the University of Chicago to Duke University.

Northeastern's official, legal response to the petition was to declare that every full-time non-tenure-track professor is a manager and therefore ineligible for unionization. This was a transparently bad-faith position on the university's part: no one believes we're managers. We cannot hire or fire, we don't have control of university budgets, and we don't set our own schedules.

No, the university's position was a legal tactic designed to trigger a hearing in front of the NLRB. Locally, this would have been fine (see above; no one believes we're actually managers). But, in its response, Northeastern signaled its intent to challenge the case that established the precedent for full-time faculty unions. In an appeal, the university could have made that case in front of an NLRB stocked with President Donald Trump's anti-labor appointees.

An upending of this precedent would undermine our unionized colleagues at institutions around the country, so we had little choice but to withdraw our petition in order to avoid a hearing. We spent the rest of the fall and most of the spring semester reaching out to our

colleagues and communities, building further support for our efforts.

A union isn't just good for those of us in it. Teaching conditions are learning conditions. Better pay and more control over schedules, class sizes, and other working conditions improves the educational experience of each and every one of our students.

A union is good for the Northeastern community, too. As a body whose members are legally protected from retaliation, we would be empowered to call on Northeastern to do the right thing for Boston—by making more than a small percentage of its recommended PILOT contributions to the city's coffers, for instance.

And people are on our side. Despite calls from Senator Elizabeth Warren, dozens of state legislators, a slew of community groups, and resolutions from the Boston City Council and Northeastern's own Faculty Senate, the school has refused to budge.

All the while, Northeastern has claimed that it was not blocking an election. In early April, we re-filed our petition for an election. Through their union-busting law firm, Jackson Lewis, Northeastern issued a response that echoed the response they gave us in the fall: a) you're all managers and b) there shouldn't be faculty unions, anyway.

Once again, we were forced to withdraw our petition rather than risk endangering hard-won worker rights at other institutions. We will continue to call on President Joseph Aoun and the Northeastern administration to do the right thing. More than that, we'd like the university to see this as an innovative move. By granting our union election—something Northeastern could do at any time—the institution could become a model for sustainable employer-employee relationships for the 21st century.

Sebastian Stockman is an Associate Teaching Professor in the English Department at Northeastern University and a member of the full-time faculty Organizing Committee.

Fenway Theater Could Pose a Serious Safety Concern

TO THE EDITOR

I have lived in the Fenway for almost 20 years, and I know that I am not alone in dreading the prospect of a medical emergency

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

or a major fire in our neighborhood when there is gridlock on our streets — at the start or at the end of Red Sox home games.

All the new buildings along Boylston Street, housing more and more residents and offices, have exacerbated the problem. The

proposed 5,400-seat Fenway Theater at 12-28 Landsdowne St. will only make things worse, much worse, especially when concerts are taking place at the same time as games at Fenway Park.

The proposed new theater provides an opportunity for the City of Boston and the

Red Sox to finally address a disaster that has been waiting to

happen in our community for a very long time.

As a practicing physician, I would like to propose that:

- There be a comprehensive, professional, and completely independent study about how to make sure there is always emergency access on the streets leading to Fenway Park during home games, and when there are concerts in the new theater. Input from The Boston Fire Department, Boston ambulance service providers, and the Boston Police Department must form the basis of this study.
- Consideration should be given to a plan that eliminates vehicle traffic on Charlesgate East and on Ipswich Street

from St. Clement's Eucharistic Shrine up to where Ipswich meets Van Ness Street, and perhaps on other streets as well, during all home games and all concerts at the new theater, so that emergency access is always maintained. These streets should be open only to pedestrians, bicycles, and the vehicles of those who live there.

I am not an attorney, but if no plan is developed that ensures that emergency access will always be available in our community, should there be a medical emergency, such as a cardiac arrest or a cerebral hemorrhage, and should that person die as a result of not being able to reach a hospital in time because of home-game or Fenway Theater concert gridlock, or should there be a fire with a major loss of property and with people injured or killed in that fire because fire engines could not reach them, I believe the Red Sox, the House of Blues and Live Nation (if there were a concert then), and perhaps also the City of Boston could well be held liable. And they should be.

SINCERELY,
ERIC CHIVIAN, M.D.

THE Fenway News

Serving the Fenway, Kenmore Square, Audubon Circle, upper Back Bay, lower Roxbury, Prudential, Mission Hill, and Longwood since 1974

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"Comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable."

The founders of The Fenway News adopted this motto to express their mission of exposing and opposing the dangers the neighborhood faced in the early 1970s—rampant arson, predatory landlords, and a destructive urban renewal plan. If the original motto no longer fits today's Fenway, we remain committed to its spirit of identifying problems and making our neighborhood a better and safer place to live.

> FREQUENCY <

The Fenway News reaches distribution sites on the Friday closest to the first of each month. Our next issue will appear

Friday, May 31.

> DEADLINE <

The deadline for letters, news items, and ads for our next issue is

Friday, May 24.

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ANNUAL MEETING

The Fenway News annual meeting will take place July 11 at 6:30pm at the Fenway Community Center. Watch for details in our June issue.

Neighborhood Newsline

Parks Department Gets OK to Test Cutting of Phragmites

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department has received approval for a three-year Muddy River Rehabilitation pilot program, which will begin removing phragmites by mechanical cutting this spring. BP&R is expected to hire contractors for the project; City staff will mow impacted areas three to four times each growing season. Following the first mowing, a wetlands seed mix will be spread to establish native ground cover. The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had asked for several changes in the plan submitted last year, requesting more specifics about disposal of phragmite cuttings and future monitoring to evaluate the pilot's success. Documents filed with the Conservation Commission include the condition that a 7,500-square-foot cattail wetland upstream of Agassiz Road not be disturbed so that it can continue to provide important habitat. The project is intended to augment Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Phase 2 work, scheduled to start in late 2020. Additionally, DEP's Waterways Regulation Program announced a public comment period for the ACOE flood-control work and the City's plans. Comments can be submitted through May 24 to Susan You, MassDEP, One Winter St. 5th floor, Boston, 02108, or emailed to Susan.You@mass.gov.

Time-Out Food Hall Adds to List of Vendors

The Time Out Market, which is scheduled to open in late spring, announced additional vendors that will be joining the 21,500 square foot market. New vendors with Fenway ties include Revolution Health Kitchen, located across from the Prudential Center, two projects from Hojoko's Tim Cushman and Rob Wong, a chicken and dumpling concept and a sushi spot. Other recently announced vendors include Mamaleh's, George Howell Coffee, Union Square Donuts, Anoush'ella, and Bisq.

Scape Details Proposal for Private Dorm on Machine Site

The private dormitory proposed by Scape on Boylston Street will be a 175-foot tall, furnished facility for undergraduate and graduate students. The project would demolish the block at 1252-1268 Boylston St., which includes the gay nightclub Marchine, as well as 1270 Boylston St., home of the Baseball Tavern. At a public meeting last month, the developer minimally discussed the project's proximity to the Back Bay Fens, the firm's purchase of the Trans National building at 2 Charlesgate West for a possible second dorm, and a third future dorm at 819 Beacon St. between Audubon Circle and Kenmore Square. Other questions relate to Scape's plan to convert the basement at the Boylston site into a 120-seat theater and whether Machine's liquor license would be transferable. While the Fenway Civic Association believes the project violates community zoning, the City and the mayor have advocated for new student housing. Public comments, due May 12, can be sent to tim.czerwienski@boston.gov.

Fenway Parking Meter Rates Will Rise

After completing a two-year study of parking rates in the Back Bay and Seaport, the City will make a series of updates of parking meter rates. Beginning July 1, parking meters in the Fenway will cost \$2.50 per hour. The City believes this will make it easier to find a metered space in the area and lead to less double parking, illegal parking, and congestion.

DASHBOARD

→ STREET CLEANING

The City cleans Fenway streets between 12 and 4pm on the first and third Wednesdays of each month (odd-numbered side) and the second and fourth Wednesdays (even-numbered side). More info at 617-635-4900 or www.cityofboston.gov/publicworks/sweeping. The state cleans streets along the Back Bay Fens on this schedule:

- **SECOND THURSDAY**
The Riverway, 12:00-3:00pm
- **SECOND FRIDAY**
The Fenway (includes inside lane), Charlesgate Extension and Forsyth Way, 8:00am-12:00pm

- **SECOND FRIDAY**
8 to 54 The Fenway (includes inside lane) and Charlesgate Extension, 12:00-3:00pm
- **THIRD TUESDAY**
 - > Park Drive (includes inside lane), upper Boylston Street, 8:00am-12:00pm
 - > Park Drive, from Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral to Kilmarnock Street and from the Riverside Line overpass to Beacon Street, 12:00-3:00pm

Visit www.mass.gov/dcr/sweep.htm for a complete schedule and maps.
Street cleaning ends for the season on December 1.

→ TRASH & RECYCLING PICK-UP

- **BACK BAY:** Trash and recycling on Monday and Thursday
- **FENWAY:** Trash and recycling on Tuesday and Friday
- **MISSION HILL:** Trash and recycling on Tuesday and Friday

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The Arts

'Windows' in the Window: Storefront Art in the LMA

PHOTO: ALISON PULITINAS



At the corner of Longwood and Huntington avenues, Boston Latin School senior Elena Vietri secures hooks for a poster promoting her exhibit, "Opening Windows: A Visual Exploration of the Highly Political Minds of Teenagers." The exhibit remains on display through early June.

90 Years On, 'Helena' Makes A Memorable Boston Debut With Rose's Odyssey Opera

The online international music blog *Opera Wire* cited the Odyssey Opera concert performance of Richard Strauss's fantasy opera *Die Aegyptische Helena* (The Egyptian Helen) at Jordan Hall on April 19 as one of "the top five operas to see this [Easter] weekend in North America." A terrific plug for the company, though the mention, which ranked Odyssey Opera right up there with Houston Grand Opera and New York's Metropolitan Opera, didn't lead to a stampede at the box office.

During the nearly-three-hour cascade of sumptuous music-making and sonic rapture that Odyssey Opera and music director Gil Rose provided, there were many empty seats both at floor level and in the balcony. But quality prevailed over quantity on this occasion because the audience made up in animal enthusiasm what it lacked in numbers.

The opera was sung in German, with projected English translation (by Christopher Bergen) on either side of the stage. Each of the two acts was rousingly applauded, and big-voiced tenor Clay Hilley—who portrayed Menelas (Menelaus), the passionate but paranoid spouse of Helen of Troy (soprano Kirsten Chambers)—triggered a standing ovation when he came onstage for his curtain call.

Waves of warm applause continued as delighted listeners acclaimed soprano Katrina Galka in the important part of Aithra, a sympathetic sorceress who magically supports and reunites Helen and Menelas; the setting of the opera is her enchanted island. Cheers also greeted Metropolitan Opera veteran Joyce Castle, mezzo soprano, who took on one of opera's most original characterizations: a singing shellfish (called "The Omniscient Mussel") that counsels Aithra in spooky, prophetic tones.

Here was Odyssey Opera once again doing what it has done supremely well for six solid seasons: deliver superb ensemble performances, in concert or full production, of operatic masterpieces that may be less-known and -performed than beloved works in the standard repertoire, but which benefit no less from being heard and seen under optimal circumstances.

Die Aegyptische Helena (1928) was the second installment of Odyssey's

spring season of operas about Helen of Troy—the fabled beauty and troublemaker of classical Greek myth and owner of the "face that launched a thousand ships," in Christopher Marlowe's timeless words. The fictive character's role in sparking the Trojan War—beginning with abduction from her native Sparta and husband Menelaus by love-struck Trojan prince Paris—and her subsequent fate in various Mediterranean locations (depending on which version of the myth you're familiar with) have inspired visual artists, writers, and composers for centuries.

For the opera, Strauss's librettist and frequent collaborator Austrian poet-playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929), raided ancient Greek poetry and drama and ultimately based the libretto on a lesser-known version of the tale, in which the Olympian gods send to Troy a "phantom double" of Helen while the actual woman abides in Egypt for the war's duration. The project was near and dear to Strauss's heart: he adored classical Greek art and culture and reportedly was moved to tears when he first saw the Parthenon in Athens. Five of his 16 completed operas are set in classical Greece and based on mythology.

One of the earliest writers to mine the Helen of Troy material was Greek dramatist Euripides, who used the femme fatale as a principal character in two of his surviving plays, *The Trojan Women*, a tragedy, and *Helen*, a tragicomedy. In later centuries, the eminent poet-playwrights Christopher Marlowe (*Doctor Faustus*) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (*Faust: Part Two*) weighed in with their interpretations of "the world's most beautiful woman." In Shakespeare's Trojan War tragicomedy *Troilus and Cressida*, Helen is a flirtatious airhead. In our own time, feminist author Margaret Atwood enlivens the discussion with a wickedly funny, irreverent poem titled *Helen of Troy Does Countertop Dancing*. "My mother was raped by a holy swan," Atwood has Helen say. "You believe that? You can take me out to dinner./ That's what we tell all the husbands." Odyssey's "Helen of Troy" series began last winter at the Huntington Avenue Theater with an austere, handsome revival of a seldom-heard but jewel-like Baroque opera by

ODYSSEY OPERA on next page >

The Arts

> MISSION HILL from page 1
Christoph Willibald Gluck (best known for his sublime *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, another Greek myth retold). This was *Paride ed Elena* (Paris and Helen), depicting the Trojan hero's courtship and abduction of Sparta's glamorous and changeable queen.

The trilogy will conclude on June 14 and 16 at the Huntington with a full staging of *La Belle Hélène* (The Beautiful Helen), a 19th-century musical romp by German-French composer Jacques Offenbach. In charge of directing *Hélène*—to be sung in English—is renowned tenor Frank Kelley, whose *Odyssey Opera* production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* two years ago was a pure joy-ride. If *La Belle Hélène* can rise to that level, Boston music lovers are in for a banquet of belly laughs.

Odyssey Opera's Good Friday program of *Die Aegyptische Helena* was the work's premiere in Boston, using Strauss's original version from 1928 which many scholars consider better than the numerous revised editions that followed the world premiere. Musically sophisticated Boston enjoys a long history of Strauss connections and warmly appreciative audiences. In recent years the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave distinguished concerts of the early Strauss operas *Salomé* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909).

One of the most prolific and revered composers who ever lived, Richard Strauss (1864-1949) completed 16 music dramas, many of which remain in high demand by opera audiences around the world. According to recent statistics, from 2008 to 2013 Strauss ranked as the second-most performed 20th-century opera composer in theaters across the international circuit. Yet despite the popularity and longevity of his operas, the composer is probably best known for his orchestral tone poems. The most famous of these—because its opening fanfare resounds in the Stanley Kubrick film classic *2001* (1968)—is *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896), a musical reflection on a text by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Strauss' other well-loved tone

poems include *Tod und Verklarung* (1888-1889) and *Till Eulenspiegel* (1894-1895), which the composer himself conducted at two Boston concerts in March 1904. He returned to our city a month later to helm two other tone poems, *Don Juan* (1888) and *Don Quixote* (1898).

Gil Rose and *Odyssey Opera* chose

The drama teems with lovers' quarrels, a storm at sea, magic spells and potions that suppress and release memory, crazed violence, and colorful characters from the beyond

Die Aegyptische Helena in part because it fits their "Helen of Troy" theme but also because it is less-familiar Strauss. However, that does not mean that it is inferior to his other operas. *Helena* is the fifth music drama the composer wrote with Hofmannsthal, who began work on it in 1919 and considered the finished libretto his best. He probably wasn't far off: the drama teems with lovers' quarrels, a storm at sea, magic spells and potions made of lotus oil that suppress and release memory, crazed violence, and colorful characters from the beyond, such as the singing mussel and a female chorus of elves.

Like Gilbert and Sullivan's, the collaboration of Strauss and Hofmannsthal was carried out by correspondence. Letters between composer and librettist indicate that both envisioned *Helena* initially as an operetta, with a fluffy plot and characters and plentiful dance sequences. But what emerged has more in common with Wagnerian grand opera than with a musical trifle à la Offenbach. Like Beethoven, Berlioz and Wagner before him, Strauss pushed the expressive possibilities of the orchestra. He thought big and wrote big. Although the composer scored *Helena* for 101 players, there were 78 at

Jordan Hall—with organ, celesta, and plentiful brass (a Strauss specialty)—and that sounded like enough. The massed voices—20 women as the elves, eight men representing soldiers of Poseidon—acquitted themselves well. Chorus Master Mariah Wilson deserved the ovation that she received.

The *Odyssey Opera*

instrumentalists were in fabulous form on Good Friday, producing a flexible sound that was both transparent and luminous under Rose's energetic, nuanced direction. The ensemble could change direction on a dime, ranging between chamber-music intimacy and symphonic grandeur. A masterly genius of orchestration, Strauss created for *Helena* a shimmering tapestry of colors and sonorities that received full value in the world-famous acoustics of Jordan Hall. If there was any reservation here, it had to do with the size of the venue. Symphony Hall around the corner on Huntington Avenue would have better accommodated the shattering blasts of "forte" playing.

The singers gave as much pleasure as the instrumentalists. Baritone Ryne Cherry as Prince Altair—a character new in Act Two who hits on Helena and invites Menelas to hunt with him—and tenor Won Whi Choi as Altair's son Da-ud, who comes to a tragic end, put in brief but effective appearances.

Both soprano Kirsten Chambers and heldentenor Clay Hilley have big, bright voices that capably shouldered the heavy passages, cut through the massive orchestra, and delivered Strauss's long-breathed vocal lines with musical aplomb. A glamorous blonde, Chambers as Helena was a golden vision. With her looks, voice and repertory this soprano, who made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2016 as Strauss's *Salomé*, seems poised for a career path similar to that of the now-retired but no less beloved American singer Jeannine Altmeyer, whose glorious specialty was the Strauss-Wagner soprano parts.

As the opera wraps up, *Die Aegyptische Helena* becomes a paean to marriage and children. In a soaring, ecstatic duet the reunited Helena and Menelas celebrate themselves as being "eternally beloved." In the last scene, Helena joins her husband and newly returned daughter Hermione, sung by angel-voiced Leah Kazuko (a senior at Chelsea High School and Boston Children's Chorus member). At the very end of the opera, the three singers posed together at the front of the stage, smiling, as if for a group photograph. Sappy? Could have been. But Strauss—who adored his wife and children and did everything he could for them—always set great store by the loving embrace of family.

John Engstrom lives in the West Fens.

WEST ELM POP-UP FOR WEST FENS ARTIST



The Brookline Ave. branch of home-goods store West Elm is supporting local artists by offering them pop-up shows on Saturdays and Sundays. West Fens resident Ruth Khowsais, who also writes for *The Fenway News*, presented a show of her works on April 6.

Area Museums Offer Many Ways to See Collections for Free

BY SHRADDHA KAKADE

There are a number of museums throughout the Fenway—from science, architecture, history, art and culture—and some offer free admission through community programs.

One of the easiest way to get free admission to a museum is through the "Museums on Us" Bank of America program. If you're a Bank of America, Merrill Lynch, or U.S. Trust credit or debit card holder, then you qualify for free entry to participating museums on the first weekend of every month. Visitors have to present a valid photo ID with their Bank of America, Merrill Lynch or U.S. Trust credit or debit card to receive the general admissions ticket.

The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum participate in the program, as does the MIT Museum outside Central Square

Also, if you're a current student, faculty, or staff member at a university or college, the MFA's University Admissions Program offers free admission to people

affiliated with participating universities, including:

- Simmons University
- Emmanuel College
- University of Massachusetts, Boston
- Wentworth Institute of Technology
- Boston University
- Northeastern University
- Massachusetts College of Art
- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy

For families with children older than seven but younger than 17, kids are eligible for free admission at the MFA on weekends, weekdays after 3pm, and on Boston public school holidays.

Additionally, every Wednesday, between 4pm. to 9:45pm, the MFA allows admission by voluntary contribution—a "pay what you want" program.

On May 27, the MFA will host a Memorial Day Open House with free entry. In June, all Boston Public Library cardholders will receive free admission to the museum. Discounted passes are available for cardholders throughout the year.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum allows free admission to community members through various programs and offers. For instance, if your name is "Isabella," you get free lifetime admission at the museum. Also, on your birthday, you are eligible for free entry with a valid photo ID. If your birthday falls on a Tuesday, when the museum is closed, you can benefit from this offer by visiting either on Monday or Wednesday.

The Gardner also has a University Admissions Program that allows free admission to current students, faculty and staff members at participating universities. Visitors have to be present a valid university ID to receive a ticket if they're affiliated with:

- Berklee College of Music
- Boston College
- Boston University
- Bunker Hill Community College
- Emmanuel College
- Harvard University
- Massachusetts College of Art and Design
- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Simmons University
- Wellesley College
- Wentworth Institute of Technology

The Gardner, in partnership with the National Endowments for the Arts and Blue Star Families, provides free entry to members of the U.S. Army and their families. Also, children younger than 17 are eligible for free admission.

Alternatively, the Massachusetts Historical Society offers a free, 90-minute tour of its building and public rooms to everyone. Entry to exhibits and the public rooms is also free any time the society is open. To learn more about the next tour, check the calendar of events on the MHS website, masshist.org.

While these are a few ways in which you can get free admission to a local museum, note that general admission tickets or tours may not include admission to special galleries, workshops and lectures.

Shraddha Kakade lives in Mission Hill.

May

CALENDAR

+ THIS SYMBOL INDICATES THAT AN EVENT IS FREE.

arts+ ENTERTAINMENT

Fri, 5/3

Celebrity Series Boston brings **PHILHARMONIX** to NEC's Jordan Hall. This all-star ensemble of classical musicians from the world-famous symphonies of Vienna and Berlin joyously scrambles genres like classical, jazz, klezmer, Latin and pop. "The Golden Rule of Philharmonix programs," says Celebrity Series, is that "anything goes, as long as it's fun." 8pm. Tickets \$35-85 through the box office or www.celebrityseries.org/, which has more details, too.

Fri, 5/3 & Sun, 5/5

HANDEL + HAYDN SOCIETY closes its season with a program headlined by Mozart's magnificent final work, *Requiem*, "universally acknowledged as one of the most powerful and moving masterpieces ever composed." Harry Christophers directs at Symphony Hall, Fri, 7:30pm and Sun, 3pm. Tickets \$25-109 at the BSO box office, 617-266-3605, or www.handelandhaydn.org.

Sat, 5/4

- Art Resource Collaborative for Kids community art festival and public art project, presents **MILES OF MURALS**. A family fun festival filled with activities, this all-day street fair offers food trucks, ice cream, arts & crafts, yoga, a raffle, and a DJ. Supported by the Red Sox, 47 Brand, and the City of Boston, the event will showcase chalk art and the unveiling of *Paredes Que Hablan (Walls that Speak)*, a series of murals created by ARCK's students and Boston artist Percy Fortini-Wright. David Ortiz Drive. **+** FREE
- **LONGWOOD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**, healthcare workers who're also talented musicians, presents a concert with pianist Doris Stevenson in a program that includes works of Stravinsky and Dvorak. As always, the concert benefits healthcare-delivery charities, in this case Bridges to Malawi and Equal Health. 8pm at NEC's Jordan Hall. Tickets \$16-49. Visit <http://longwoodsymphony.org/> for tickets, details about the program, and information about the work of the beneficiary organizations.

Sat, 5/4 & Sun, 5/5

Unbound Visual Arts hosts **ARTS EXPO AND CITY HEART SHOW** at the Prudential Center, 10am-4pm. Meet Boston-area artists and purchase their art at an event with live music, community art-making, **+** art demonstrations, and other fun activities. FREE.

SENIOR EVENTS

Events take place at the Peterborough Senior Center or Fenway Community Center. Find the Senior Center entrance by walking into the alley between 100 and 108 Jersey St. and looking left. For more information, call 617-536-7154.

- **Thu, 5/9 at 11:30am: Opening Reception for Matti Kniva Spencer's "FACE OF MASSACHUSETTS" art exhibit.**
- **Tue, 5/14 at 12pm: Performance by NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY JAZZ DUO. Mother's Day brunch will follow the performance.**
- **Tue, 5/28 at 1pm: SUMMER SAFETY TALK with BPD D-4's Community Police Officer, Elizabeth Evans.**

Sun, 5/5

Typically held each year in November, **SPRING 'OPEN STUDIOS'** event welcomes everyone to see the architectural splendor of Fenway Studios in an entirely new light. View works in multiple media, including oil, **+** acrylic, mixed-media, water colors, and pastels. 11am-5pm. FREE.

Thu, 5/9, 5/16, 5/23, & 5/30

COOKIN' IN THE FENWAY WITH BARBARA FAY. Attendees will learn ten essential tools and twelve must-have ingredients in every kitchen with East Fens resident Barbara Fay. May 9: salads and appetizers; May 16: vegetarian entrees; May 23: non-vegetarian entrees; and May 30: dessert (of course). Each class \$25 or \$20 for Community Center members. 6:30-8pm. Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston St.

Thu, 5/9

Fenway Community Development Corporation hosts **YOGA CLASS WITH LIZZIE**, 6-7pm at Morville House, 100 Norway St. Contact Emily Kribbs at ekribbs@fenwaycdc.org or (617) 267-4637 x13 for details. FREE

Thu, 5/9 ⇨ Sun, 5/19

The National Center for Jewish Film's annual film festival brings together restored classics and indie films from Canada, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, Israel, the US and Denmark, among other points of origin. Various times, tickets \$13/15 (members/nonmember). See the full program at www.mfa.org/programs/film.

Sat, 5/11

- Take a **WALKING TOUR TO EXPLORE THE EVOLUTION OF BOSTON SOCIETY** as seen in its built environment—from museums to hospitals to churches—and the contrast between old and new. Intriguingly, the tour, led by trained guide Stephen Jerome, focuses on the Longwood Area. Sponsored by Brookline Adult & Community Education. Meet at Longwood Station on the Riverside Line. Details and tickets (\$22) at www.brooklineadulted.org or 617-730-2700.
- **THE BOSTON BUBBLE FESTIVAL** returns to the Boston Common from 11am to 1pm. The celebration will include giant floating bubble demonstrations from various bubble performers, a DJ, live **+** entertainment, giveaways, and more. FREE

Tue, 5/14

PIANOSONOMA BOSTON INAUGURAL CONCERT. This new festival fosters collaboration between artists-in-residence and musicians of all backgrounds. Program includes music by Beethoven, Adams, Glass, and Piazzola and culminates in a new arrangement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5. Sponsored by Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Seully Hall, 8 The Fenway, 7pm. For more information, visit www.pianosonoma.org or call 646-584-9653. FREE.

Thu, 5/16

- **LOWELL LECTURE: HELEN BURNHAM.** Curator of the *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Stars of Paris* exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Burnham is an expert in 19th-century French art. Lowell will discuss a portfolio of prints by Toulouse-Lautrec in the Boston Public Library collection, considered one of his most important. BPL Copley Branch, Rabb Lecture Hall. 6pm. **+** Details at www.lowellinstitute.org/event/1030/ FREE.
- In **BERNSTEIN REIMAGINED**, a broad selection of Boston musicians reinterprets the works of Leonard Bernstein in unexpected ways to mark the centennial of the composer's birth. Bernstein produced a prodigious body of work that ranged from Broadway

Visit the MFA for Free on Memorial Day



PICK OF THE MONTH
Kick off your summer with family art-making, gallery tours and talks, musical performances, fun outdoor activities, and a Frida Kahlo-inspired puppet show. Entry and all activities are free. For more details on the day's agenda, visit www.mfa.org. 10am-5pm.

shows (*On The Town*, *West Side Story*) to sonatas, concertos, and symphonies. Hosted by Broadway personality Seth Rudetsky and Broadway star Andrea Burns. Berklee Performance Center, 7:30pm. Tickets \$25-60 at the Berklee box office or www.jartsboston.org, which also has more details on the show.

Fri, 5/17

Join the Fenway Community Center and Fenway CDC for a screening and panel discussion of **HUMAN SCALE**, a documentary about how the built environment affects human lives and experiences. A panel discussion follows featuring Jacob Wessel (Public Realm Director for the City of Boston) and community advocates. Fenway **+** Community Center, 1282 Boylston St. 6:30-9pm. FREE

Sat, 5/18

CITY NATIVES NURSERY ANNUAL PLANT SALE. Choose from an assortment of Mattapan-grown heirloom and hybrid vegetable and herb seedlings and soil amendments, and get great gardening advice from this nursery run by the Trustees of Reservations' All the plant varieties are organically raised and suited to Boston's climate; many of the vegetable varieties are compact and disease-resistant. 10am-2pm, 30 Edgewater Drive, Mattapan. Details and list of available plants at www.thetrustees.org/things-to-do/metro-boston/event-44378.html

Sun, 5/19

WALK TO END ELDER ISOLATION benefits FriendshipWorks' programs to keep elders healthy and connected through friendly visiting, medical escorts, PetPals, and more. The walk circles Jamaica Pond, and ends with a celebratory complimentary lunch. Details at www.fw4elders.org. Pre-register or register on the day at Rogerson House, 434 Jamaica Way, starting at 9am. More info from events@fw4elders.org or by phone 617-482-1510.

Wed, 5/22

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP MISSION GRAMMAR SCHOOL ANNUAL ROAD TO COLLEGE GALA. Emmanuel College Auditorium,

Administration Building, 400 The Fenway. Tickets \$75; contact advancement@missiongrammar.org for info. 6pm.

Sat, 5/25

French composer and multi-instrumentalist **YANN TIERSEN** creates fragile, evocative compositions filled with achingly beautiful melodies. Perhaps best known for his award-winning soundtrack for the film *Amélie*, that only scratches the surface of his rich musical output. Tiersen performs solo on piano and violin for this concert. Berklee Performance Center, 136 Massachusetts Avenue. 8pm. Tickets \$30-\$58 available at the box office or www.etix.com/ticket/p/4252531.

Now ⇨ Sun, 5/12

Wheelock Family Theatre wraps up its season with a new adaptation of **ROALD DAHL'S JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH**, featuring music and lyrics by the team behind Dear Evan Hansen. Fri, 7:30pm; Sat-Sun, 2pm. Tickets \$20-40. More details at www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org/. Tickets available online, at **+** the box office (Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm), or 617-353-3001.

Now ⇨ Sat, 5/25

INDECENT. Director Rebecca Taichman recreates her Tony-award winning Broadway production, inspired by the true story of Sholem Asch's 1923 controversial play, *God of Vengeance*, which featured lesbian lovers in a traditional Jewish community. Huntington Theatre, 264 Huntington Ave. Tickets at huntingtontheatre.org or (617) 266-0800.

Now ⇨ Sun, 6/2

Brookline's Studio Without Walls presents **REVERBERATIONS**, its 20th exhibit of outdoor sculpture along the Riverway. Featuring 20 artists working in a variety of media, the show celebrates the park and the arrival of spring. Enter the park across from Longwood Towers via Chapel Street at the Longwood stop of the Green Line's D branch. More information at www.studiowithoutwalls.org. (Hat tip to the Emerald Necklace Conservancy.) **+** FREE.

@ THE CENTER

These highlights from the Fenway Community Center's calendar are free unless noted otherwise. Visit the Center at 1282 Boylston or check out the full calendar at www.fenwaycommunitycenter.org/calendar

- **TAI CHI FOR ARTHRITIS AND FALLS PREVENTION, Mondays 2-3pm and Fridays 12-1pm. Led by a certified instructor, the series begins May 6 and repeats through June 28. In partnership with Peterborough Senior Center and Brigham & Women's Hospital. Call the Senior Center at (617) 536-7154 to register.**
- **LIFESAVERS: DR. JAMES O'CONNELL "HELPING THE HOMELESS," Weds, May 8, 7-9pm. President of Boston Health**

Care for the Homeless Program, O'Connell has spent decades working to provide healthcare to Boston's unhoused population. He shares his insights on access to healthcare in and the state of homelessness in Boston today. \$10, FREE for seniors/students. If entry presents a financial hardship, contact hello@fenwaycommunitycenter.org or call (857) 246-9053.

- **LATINX POTLUCK, Sat., May 18, 1-4pm. Presented in partnership with Fenway CDC. Celebrate Latinx food and culture in Fenway! An opportunity to create community and learn about the resources offered at Fenway Community Center. Bring a dish or dessert to share.**