

April 4, 2024

To: Montgomery County Council

From: Casimir Eitner and Patricia Underwood

Re: National Philharmonic

As long time residents and active members of the biotechnology and visual arts communities of Montgomery County, we voice our strong support for NatPhil's President/CEO Jim Kelly's request for a \$300,000 line item in the county budget dedicated to the National Philharmonic.

We particularly value NatPhil's focus on ensuring that minority and female representation is featured in its programming. Just this year, most of its concerts have included composers, conductors and performers of color who are often overlooked in other orchestras. They have received rave reviews for their excellence.

And just this week a Washington Post article featured the essential work of NatPhil's concert master in providing a way for orchestras around the country to identify works to perform by female American composers.

NatPhil also provides excellent ways to expose, encourage and mentor young students with a wide range of programs – from concerts for second graders to teaching institutes for talented middle and high school musicians. And, all its concerts are free to children under 14 years of age. Its reach in the county is deep and wide.

Like many arts organizations across the country, and particularly orchestras in a post-covid world, NatPhil is facing financial challenges. While concert audiences are robust, donations and financial contributions have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Yet, NatPhil's operating costs have risen an average of 20% since 2020. This year, to offset some of these challenges, the board of directors made the difficult decision to cancel two spring concerts, recast the budget, and reduce the administrative staff.

The NatPhil is a treasure in Montgomery County. We are immensely proud of the role they play in the county and the area with top-tier, inclusive programming. We add our voice to those who want to see it supported through a direct line item of \$300,000 in the county budget.

As we look to the 2024-2025 season, NatPhil will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in the county. With line item funding, NatPhil can be confident that it has the full support of county leadership as it continues to bring excellent concerts, educational programming, and community events to everyone.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Underwood and Casimir Eitner