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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Brattleboro Music Center executive director retires

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2 After 12 years of leadership, Mary Greene will retire in  
3 August

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 After 12 years at the helm, Mary Greene, executive  
6 director of the Brattleboro Music Center (BMC), is retiring  
7 effective Saturday, Aug. 1.

8 "This has been my dream job," she said in a recent  
9 interview. "I felt that way 12 years ago, and I feel that way now."

10 Greene and her family moved to Brattleboro in 1991.

11            “We first became involved with the BMC when we were  
12 looking for a cello teacher for our daughter,” Greene said. “Three  
13 of our children took lessons there, and all four attended BMC  
14 music camps.”

15            This involvement led to Greene’s serving two terms on  
16 the board of trustees, including as board president, concluding in  
17 2003. However, she continued to stay involved.

18            When the BMC began looking for a new managing  
19 director in 2014, Greene applied.

20            “I thought that my skill sets and my experience in  
21 education were a good match for what the organization was  
22 seeking,” she said.

23            Greene first served as co-director with Patricia Mangan,  
24 board treasurer, in 2014.

25            “In the summer of 2015, I took over solo,” Greene said.

26            Then began an unanticipated whirlwind sequence of  
27 events over a span of months.

28            For decades the BMC had been renting space from Saint  
29 Michael’s Catholic Church on Walnut Street in Brattleboro,  
30 occupying the front half of the building that had served as the  
31 residence for the nuns who taught at Saint Michael’s Catholic  
32 School next door.

33            “Walnut Street was to be our ‘temporary’ home,” Greene  
34 said. “Temporary turned out to be 38 years.”

35            Early in 2015, the church said it would not be renewing  
36 the BMC’s lease after the following year because St. Brigid’s  
37 Kitchen and Food Pantry, which provides hot meals and grocery  
38 items, required more space to meet increased need.

39            “At different times over the decades, the board had  
40 searched for a new home, only to be stymied each time,” Greene  
41 said.

42            A new board committee began looking for a new site.

43            “We learned that Winston Prouty Center had decided to  
44 buy the former Austine School campus, which meant they would

45 vacate their site on the former Frances Hicks School campus  
46 opposite Living Memorial Park," she said.

47 "Everything was in motion," Greene continued. "There  
48 was a new sense of urgency. We already had a capital campaign  
49 underway, but it kicked into high gear once we knew we would  
50 be relocating."

51 The board was committed to doing so without debt.

52 "The BMC has deep roots in this community," she said.  
53 "People who have been touched emotionally by experiences here  
54 serve as our ambassadors. We've built relationships over decades.  
55 People responded generously, and they continue to do so."

56 On July 8, 2016, the BMC took ownership of the Prouty  
57 campus, with the official groundbreaking taking place on  
58 September 15, a mere two months later.

59 The BMC worked with Simons Architects from Portland,  
60 Maine, because of the firm's experience designing spaces for  
61 music, Greene said.

62 The existing building was remodeled for the music  
63 school to enhance music instruction, providing 15 teaching  
64 studios purpose-built and soundproofed with acoustic panels,  
65 four double piano studios, a mixed-use classroom, and a music  
66 library.

67 The BMC's commitment to excellence also led to a  
68 newly constructed 4,400-square-foot performance auditorium,  
69 Greene said.

70 It became the first new hall in the area specifically  
71 designed for chamber music since 1895, when an opera house  
72 was added to the Brattleboro Town Hall. That space was  
73 demolished in 1953.

74 "From the beginning our plans included a public  
75 performance space optimized for chamber music," Greene said.  
76 "That had always been the dream. How fortunate we have been  
77 to see that dream realized."

78 That connection to excellence, Greene said, has existed  
79 from the BMC's founding in 1952 by violinist Blanche Honegger

80 Moyses to “promote the love and understanding of good music  
81 through performance and education, and make it a vital part of  
82 the community.

83 “We believe that music is for everyone,” Greene said.  
84 “Our mission has always been to foster the joy and understanding  
85 of music, and make it available to all people at any stage of life.”

86 The BMC officially moved to its new campus in 2017.

87 Greene said the BMC faced another urgent situation in  
88 the spring of 2020 during the Covid lockdown.

89 “There was the tragedy of the murder of George Floyd  
90 and the resulting Black Lives Matter movement,” Greene said.

91 “Organizations throughout the country, and certainly in this  
92 community, responded with statements and actions of support.  
93 The BMC staff held daily online conversations asking what these  
94 events and this movement meant for us.”

95 At both the staff and board level, Greene continued, “we  
96 realized and agreed that we had a responsibility as an  
97 organization to respond programmatically. We asked, ‘What  
98 repertoire is being performed and being taught here?’”

99 In answering this question, the board decided to develop  
100 an artist-in-residence program to deepen and expand the BMC’s  
101 repertoire in a lasting way.

102 “We conducted a national search, and had the good  
103 fortune to find the organization Castle of Our Skins, and Ashleigh  
104 Gordon, a violist, the organization’s co-founder with Anthony R.  
105 Green,” Greene said.

106 Castle of Our Skins is a Boston-based concert and  
107 educational series devoted to celebrating Black artistry through  
108 music.

109 “Gordon had the role of BMC’s artist-in-residence for two  
110 years and has continued to advise and provide resources to staff  
111 and faculty since then,” Greene said. “Gordon has familiarized  
112 the entire BMC community — faculty, students, program  
113 attendees — with the music of seldom-heard Black composers  
114 through presentations, discussions, visits to the Music in the

115 Schools groups, and performances. It has been a wonderful  
116 connection.”

117 Although Gordon will step down this summer from her  
118 leadership role at Castle of Our Skins, Greene said the BMC will  
119 continue to work with the organization next season and beyond.

120 “The BMC’s growth under Mary’s extraordinary  
121 leadership has been organizational as much as musical,” said  
122 Lisa Cox, president of the BMC’s board of trustees.

123 Greene “has guided us in broadening our mission from a  
124 simple focus on the classical tradition to embracing high-quality  
125 music across a range of historical traditions,” she said.

126 “You can now experience at the BMC anything from  
127 Monteverdi to traditional Québécois, from North Indian classical  
128 to big band, from little-known African American composers to  
129 Japanese composers of video game music,” Greene continued.  
130 “Mary has always understood that fostering the joy and  
131 understanding of music means opening the door as wide as  
132 possible.”

133 While still very much involved in guiding the day-to-day  
134 operation of the BMC, Greene also is reflecting on her 12 years  
135 as executive director.

136 “What an exceptional privilege it has been to work with  
137 this team of colleagues, with the board leadership, and with the  
138 breathtaking generosity and encouragement of this community,”  
139 she said. “To have been a part of this effort is something I’ll hold  
140 forever.”

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