

# Foundling

Baroque Orchestra & Women's Advocacy Project

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## The Vision

• **AIM: To develop a world-class professional string orchestra, based in Providence, that is a real working team dedicated both to excellence in music and to helping women and children in need.**

## The Inspiration

• *l'Ospedale della Pietà* (Venice's "Mercy Hospital"), home to the city's orphaned and abandoned girl children, who were given an honored place in civic life through an arts program that may be unrivaled even today. Antonio Vivaldi, who taught and composed at the Pietà in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wrote many of his most beloved compositions for this orchestra of girls and women, who achieved a level of virtuosity and elegance that has rarely been equaled. The foundling hospital musicians played and sang throughout Venice, becoming the premier musical ensemble in a supremely musical city. They supported themselves and the orphanage with their musical work and attracted the attention and acclaim of all of Europe. We take the Venetian foundling home as our historical guide, artistically and socially.

• **Our hope is that Foundling, too, will achieve significant artistic stature while working to foster public awareness, private and corporate generosity, and civic responsibility and pride.**

## The Music

• **AIM: To bring the magic and excitement of 17<sup>th</sup> - and 18<sup>th</sup> - century string ensemble music to life for 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences.**

• The string ensemble can form the basis for other projects, including symphonic works and concerti with winds, early oratorio and opera.

## The Artists

• **AIM: To assemble an all-star Baroque string orchestra of 13-24 women, featuring the members of the ensemble & distinguished guest artists as soloists; to create and develop a collaborative ensemble of extraordinary musicians committed to women's empowerment, and to helping those in need.**

• The Directors: Violinist and conductor Dana Maiben, Music Director, has earned international recognition for her work in the early string ensemble and solo repertoires. Margaret Cushing, Artistic Director, has been working in Providence as a performer, teacher, and producer for over a decade. Elisabeth Le Guin, PhD, Musical Advisor and principal cellist, is one of the foremost baroque cellists in the country, and brings a keen historical and musical scholarship to the project.



## Community Partnership

- **AIM: To bring this tremendous artistic resource to bear on the issues, needs, and concerns of women and children in our community.**
- Our initial partnership is with Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. RICADV provides fiscal and accounting services, guidance in developing our dual mission, and organizational support.

## History and Current Projects

♦ August 2003 Debut concerts in Woods Hole, MA, and Providence, RI, after a week of retreat, intense rehearsal, and brainstorming in Bourne, MA. The retreat has been repeated yearly, with concerts on Cape Cod in August.

♦ November 2003, November 2004 Concert with High Tea at two different historic homes in Providence, to benefit Foundling.

♦ Spring 2004 Foundling was awarded a \$5000 planning grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts to plan a New England Seacoast tour

♦ April 2004 A concert at Grace Church in Providence, funded in part by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts.

♦ August 2004, Foundling incorporated as Foundling, Inc., a non-profit corporation in RI; federal 501(c)3 application in process.

♦ 2004-2005 Debut Season of three concerts in Providence; the first was a benefit for RICADV.

♦ 2005-2006 Foundling's second season in Rhode Island. Tremendous response from audiences to our request for material assistance to shelters.

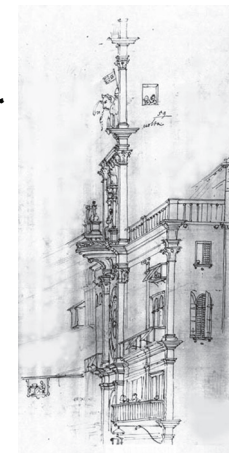
♦ Ongoing Planning for a New England coastal tour, which will aid in establishing our artistic profile in New England and in developing our women's advocacy project in increasingly concrete ways.

♦ Grants from RISCA, Boston Foundation, NEFA, support our season expenses and tour planning. Major sponsorships from Residential Properties, NBC Channel 10, and RIPTA.

♦ More than 150 individual donors as of April 2006.

## The Future

- **AIM: To generate concrete community support.**
- Build an effective, dedicated board and volunteer corps; grow an audience; raise operating and special project funds; develop relationships with foundations, corporations, government agencies, and social service projects.
- Establish a collaborative model that involves players in professional development, management and artistic issues.
- Articulate long-term artistic and strategic plans.
- Cultivate collaborations with great artists.
- Develop advocacy mission in activities and programming.
- Create an educational component of our offerings.
- Seek festival appearances, concert engagements, special projects, and recording & broadcast opportunities.



“The brilliant technique and grace of the musicians of Foundling make it one of the finest ensembles in the nation....All in all, one of the most exciting concerts I have ever heard.”

*Audience member,  
jazz musician*

“...one of the best things to happen to the local classical music scene in a long, long time.”

*--Channing Gray,  
The Providence Journal*

“...inspired, edge-of-your-seat playing”

*The Providence Journal*

“Grace Church and its marvelous acoustics... provide the perfect accompaniment to the soaring sounds of love and hope embodied in the music of Foundling.... a tapestry of silken sounds in many hues”

*East Side Monthly*

[www.foundling.org](http://www.foundling.org)

## String group's performance full of moments to savor

01:00 AM EDT on Monday, April 12, 2004

BY CHANNING GRAY  
Journal Arts Writer

Foundling is one of the best things to happen to the local classical music scene in a long, long time.

The fledgling string group gave a stunning performance last night at Grace Church, the kind of program you might expect to hear in major music centers but not around here.

This was loose, fluid playing that was attentive to detail and at its best, able to swing.

A violin duet in the middle of a Bach cantata was about as close to jazz as Baroque music gets.

This all-female ensemble takes its name from the women of the Italian foundling home where Vivaldi once worked as a music teacher.

The group has been working in tandem with the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, as a sort of orchestra with a social mission. Part of the proceeds from its concerts help support the coalition.

Foundling made its debut back in the summer, and last night music director Dana Maiben was talking about launching a Providence season next year. It would be welcomed.

The players, most from the Boston area (although acclaimed Baroque cellist Elisabeth LeGuin lives in California), are all specialists in Baroque performance styles, which calls for a flat, vibratoless tone and a lighter bow technique, not to mention a knack for dressing up melodic lines.

Providence, by virtue of being in the shadow of Boston, an early music mecca, has hosted many a fine Baroque-period group in the past, but none with more bounce and drive than Foundling.

This was playing that was full of surprises, of unexpected twists and turns. And moments worth savoring, like the courtly polonaise from a Handel concerto grosso.

Even the group's wardrobe was a little unusual. The women showed up in jeans and white T-shirts.

Last night's program was all Baroque with a nod to Easter. Boston-area soprano Pamela Murray sang a couple of arias from Handel's Messiah, then ended the evening with Jauchzet Gott, one of Bach's most joyous cantatas.

Kris Ingles joined in on the natural trumpet for the Bach. That's the high valveless cousin of the modern trumpet that's heard so often in Baroque music.

Murray, who has the Baroque sound down cold, was a perfect fit for this band of 14 instrumentalists. She might have carried better, though, had she stood in front of the strings. As it was, her clear but light soprano tended to be overshadowed by the orchestra and gobbled up by Grace Church's ample acoustics.

But her upbeat rendition of "Rejoice greatly" from Messiah was a real treat, with all those running passages sounding so crisp and smooth.

Maiben and Julia McKenzie, interesting and energetic players both, teamed up for some incredible duet work in the Bach, the kind of playing that had a wonderful sense of rapport and that makes Foundling so special.

Let's just hope Providence gets behind this exceptional band of string players.

  
Margaret Cushing  
Dana Maiben  
Artistic Director Music Director