



Larry Alan Smith, Artistic and Executive Director

Wintergreen Performing Arts – Who We Are

The history of the growth and development of Wintergreen Performing Arts, Inc. (WPAI) and the Wintergreen Summer Music Festival (WSMF) is truly a remarkable story, featuring impressive levels of community commitment and perseverance that continue to the present day. It began on Saturday morning, June 25, 1995, at a meeting of Wintergreen Mountain and Valley music lovers. The first concert was held in a home on Wintergreen Mountain and featured performances by local Wintergreen residents. In the early years, public concerts were held at the Rockfish Presbyterian Church, Wintergreen Resort's Skyline Pavilion, and the Red Barn at Rodes Farm.

The year 1997 was highly significant for WPAI. During that year, the organization launched the first Wintergreen Summer Music Festival, featuring the American Sinfonietta conducted by Michael Palmer. The Festival included several outstanding guest artists: violinist Robert McDuffie, classical guitarist Pepe Romero, and pianist Robert Roux. Another important accomplishment of the 1997 season was the initiation of an education program that included both a partnership with the Nelson County Schools and the American Sinfonietta Performance Academy, a training program for pre-professional artists. Yet another highlight of the 1997 season was a series of weekly in-home chamber music concerts performed by Festival orchestra musicians and guest artists. These concerts took place in historic homes located along the James River in Nelson County.

In 1998 the Festival was moved from the Skyline Pavilion to the newly-erected John D. Evans Center, thus providing not only improved acoustics for WPAI's performances but also invigorating the organization with a new sense of permanence. The generosity of John Evans, owner of a second home on Wintergreen Mountain, was critical in helping WPAI establish itself as a permanent organization.

In 1999 David Wiley, conductor of the Roanoke Symphony, was hired as the first Artistic Director and first WPAI staff member. Under David Wiley's leadership, musicians were recruited from across the nation to create the Wintergreen Festival Orchestra. At the same time, the Wintergreen Festival Academy was established to train talented high school and college musicians.

Following intensive outside consultation and internal deliberations in 2005, the WPAI board adopted a new leadership model, with administrative and artistic direction being combined in a single position. A national search was conducted during the winter of 2005, resulting in the hiring of Larry Alan Smith as WPAI's new Artistic and Executive Director. Smith, a nationally renowned composer and educator, is a former Dean of the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford and is currently Professor of Composition there. He brings with him the artistic and administrative expertise required to take WPAI to new artistic heights. The organization looks with optimism to a future filled with the excitement generated by an enhanced educational program for both the Wintergreen Summer Music Academy and the students of Nelson County, and by the inspiration that comes from great music performed in the splendor of the Blue Ridge Mountains.