

Macon Creek's 2026 Community Music Series starts with a bang

By **BRAD HEINEMAN**
Clinton Local

MACON TWP. — Those who might have missed out on attending Sunday afternoon's percussion-based concert on the campus of Macon Creek, featuring percussionist Jonathan Brown, will have the opportunity to see Brown on stage again in April during the second performance of Macon Creek's 2026 Community Music Series.

The Ann Arbor native drummer — a soon-to-be Macon Township resident — presented an intimate afternoon of music built on close listening, collaboration and room for discovery.

"Rhythmic Dimensions" was the title of Sunday's percussion concert, which explored a wide array of sound through instruments like marimba, vibraphone, drums and more.

The concert marked the official kickoff to Macon Creek's "Tales, Legends & Legacy" music series that is being

presented throughout the spring and summer months through a partnership with Beacon Arts Michigan.

Macon Creek is located on the former Boysville campus in Macon. Since 2021, the artistic campus — under the direction and guidance of Kim Tucker-Gray and John Goodell — continues to unfold through artistry, innovation and music education.

"Part of what (the partnership with Beacon Arts Michigan) has allowed us to do here at Macon Creek, is to focus on the space itself and to be doing outreach and getting more and more people involved," Tucker-Gray said. "It's a busy street and we've been here five years, but many people still don't know about us."

Macon Creek's address is 8759 Clinton Macon Road. The campus encompasses more than 5,000 square feet of event spaces that overlook hundreds of historic acres once farmed by Henry Ford.

"Tales, Legends & Legacy" is Macon Creek's first-ever

music series the campus has hosted. Upcoming concerts are scheduled for April 19 (featuring Brown and others in a collage concert), May 17, June 6, July 19 and Aug. 16.

"We've done summer camps; we've done popups and we've done individual concerts. But this year we committed to a full music series — music and other creative series," Tucker-

Gray said.

Intertwined with and around the scheduled concerts are artistic masterclasses/workshops

SEE MUSIC 5



Percussionist Jonathan Brown

PHOTO BY BRAD HEINEMAN

'You can hear and feel the vibrations'

that each of the performing artists will lead. One week before Brown's "Rhythmic Dimensions" concert, he coordinated a percussion masterclass titled, "Finding the Percussionist's Craft," which explored the rhythm and narrative of percussion.

"It felt good playing a lot of the music that I love to play so close to where I will eventually live," he said. "Hopefully, the next time I play here, I'll be doing a concert of all my music that I've written."

Information about how to attend and sign up as a student for the upcoming workshops can be found online by visiting maconcreek.org/live/tales. The Bayberry String Quartet, which is slated to perform at Macon Creek in May, will hold a "Story of the String Quartet" masterclass at 2 p.m. May 16, intended for intermediate and advanced string students in Lenawee County.

Another part of Macon Creek's mission is getting into the local school systems and informing both teachers and students about the availability of music education on the campus.

Through the partnership with Beacon Arts Michigan, there

is a shared belief with Macon Creek that access to the arts/music is deserving of all people — whether urban or rural communities.

The mission of Beacon Arts Michigan is "Connecting communities through shared artistry." This year alone, Beacon Arts Michigan — which was founded by flutist Emily Olson as an avenue to bring music to Michigan's Upper Peninsula — is set to partner with event locations and concerts in Ann Arbor, Curtis, Escanaba and Manistique, in addition to Macon Creek.

Olson, Beacon Arts Michigan's president and artistic director, said Sunday she thought a lot about access to the arts, and how artists perform in areas and spaces but oftentimes not for the compensation factor.

"I really wanted to found an organization that would really keep that quality high and also sustain the artists who were providing that network to those communities," she said.

As an audience member at Sunday's percussion concert, the setting was intimate enough that front row guests literally were able to touch the instruments.

"You can hear and feel the vibrations," said Goodell, while noting Macon Creek seeks to show young learners and audience members how stories can be told through music and collaboration — nonverbally.

"I learned about 25 things today," Goodell said after watching Brown's performance. "... You just learn and (music) is always educational."

According to Brown, he programmed the "Rhythmic Dimensions" concert to start very rhythmic, devolve into an absence of rhythm, and then return to rhythm for the final piece.

One of the instruments he used during his set was a custom-made glass marimba. Another piece was performed on a multi-percussion setup that allowed Brown to play tons of different instruments including temple blocks, cowbell, woodblocks, drums, cymbals and some random pieces of junk metal that were found throughout Macon Creek's campus.

"I wanted to incorporate some of Macon Creek into the performance," he said.

Brown performed pieces of music written by several minimalist composers including

William Duckworth, as well as the song "New York Counterpoint" by Steve Reich. Philip Glass was another composer which Brown performed Sunday, as was a musical work by Ann Arbor percussion composer David Hollinden.

In addition to private instruction, Brown served as an adjunct professor at Oakland Community College, teaching History of Popular Music. He is an active clinician and has presented percussion masterclasses throughout the United States as well as internationally in Argentina and Colombia, working with students in both academic and community-based settings.

He is an accomplished percussionist and educator with more than two decades of teaching experience and more than 15 years as a professional freelance performer. He maintains a private percussion studio that has supported students of all ages, with an emphasis on technical development, style and practical musicianship.

"If people didn't get to hear John today, they will get to hear him again on April 19," Olson said. "He's going to reprise some of these pieces and maybe some other new stuff."