

# Cellists at St. Paul's Towers Bring Back Bach

Whether they're playing Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms, Jim Bloom and Ruth Belvin savor every moment. The two St. Paul's Towers residents and long-time cellists are giving an encore of their diverse musical careers. With the help of a professional coach, Jim and Ruth dive into some of classical music's greatest hits every week. Most recently, it's been Haydn's trios for violin, viola, and cello.

Jim and Ruth each bring something important to the partnership. Having performed with the Atlanta Symphony for three years in the 1950s, Ruth is the more musically experienced of the two. "It's been great playing with Ruth," Jim said. "I learn a lot from her." In turn, Jim has helped Ruth reignite her passion for cello.



Musicians Jim and Ruth play for their community.

After her stint in the Symphony, Ruth stepped back from music, focusing on raising her family, earning her MBA, and working at a law firm. During that time, she dabbled in a few amateur string quartets. Now, she's excited to fully nurture her talent once again at St. Paul's Towers. "Music is one of the joys of my life," Ruth said. "I'm grateful that I've been able to play more at St. Paul's Towers than I did previously."

While Ruth started out on the cello, Jim's first instrument was the violin. He said his journey began with a "musical zoo" because as a fourth grader he had the opportunity to choose from a menagerie of instruments. Landing on the violin, he continued to play throughout high school and college.

Years later, in his 60s, when the violin no longer called to him, Jim began to take cello lessons. Soon he found himself in trios, quartets, and an orchestra. Being in a large ensemble taught him some important things about performance. "I learned to 'fake it'," Jim said with a laugh. "As long as you start and end on time, no one notices what you do in the middle."

During the pandemic, Jim had a hankering to continue playing in an ensemble, but performance opportunities were hard to come by. When he moved to St. Paul's Towers, he finally found a community where he could connect over his love of music. The intimate setting of a chamber group gave him the opportunity to expand his skills.

"I'm learning how musicians communicate non-verbally," Jim said. "It's challenging because you need to look at them instead of looking at your music." In contrast to performing in an orchestra, Jim

added, in chamber music only one person plays each part, so it's impossible to hide if you make a mistake! Jim hopes to one day embody the fearlessness and conviction that Ruth and other experienced musicians bring to their performance.

Looking to the future, Jim and Ruth hope to expand their repertoire and performance opportunities by bringing other musical residents into their ensemble. They're eager to collaborate. With the right instrumentation, they'll be able to play Bach's Brandenburg concertos—and build their musicianship to a peak crescendo.