

Celebrating 20 Years...

# WEST END NEWS

## Portland Conservatory of Music's New Home in Portland's West End

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**By Tony Zeli**

Portland Conservatory of Music is moving to the West End and hopes to start music instruction in the new location as soon as this fall. In the meantime, they are renovating and introducing themselves to the neighborhood.



*The Portland Conservatory of Music (PCM) has a new home at 28 Neal Street, previously the Second Parish Church.*

Portland Conservatory of Music (PCM) is a classically based nonprofit music school that is celebrating its 25th anniversary. They first opened their doors on Free Street and spent the last 12 years at Woodfords Congregational Church. They are excited to be moving to a new, larger location at 28 Neal Street.

PCM's Executive Director Jean Murachanian said she is very excited about moving to the West End. She noted that the new location is within walking distance from downtown Portland, making it more convenient and accessible to a wider segment of the community, who she hopes PCM can reach with new programming.

An anonymous donor gifted about \$1 million to make the purchase possible. PCM closed on 28 Neal Street in May and they are currently renovating the space. They hope to begin instruction and performances in the new space as soon as this fall.

## 28 NEAL STREET

Built in 1960, Second Parish Presbyterian Church called the West End home for sixty years. Second Parish has moved to a larger space at 368 Gorham Road in Scarborough. As for PCM, the nine thousand square feet at 28 Neal Street is a major upgrade. They will have nearly twice the space as they had at their Woodfords location. Still, there is a lot of work ahead to prepare the former church to receive students and staff.

### Renovations & Acoustics

For the first phase of renovations, PCM has retained Wright Ryan as the construction manager. The first phase includes fresh air system, fire alarm system, acoustical improvements, interior paint, roof, outside handrails, and an ADA ramp to the performance space. Next summer another round of renovations will include a lift/elevator to a lower level.

Renovations to the building include improvements to windows which will save energy and help reduce noise transmission. Acoustical improvements also include sound absorbing panels to reduce sound traveling between music studios.

"We are family orientated and generally limited to after school hours," said Jean Murachanian, PCM's director. "Historically our performances use minimal amplification as we are focused on classical and jazz music."

### Parking

The location has a parking lot that Murachanian believes will be sufficient for their day-to-day activities, but they will need to make use of on-street parking for performances. They are looking for creative solutions should the need arise for more parking.

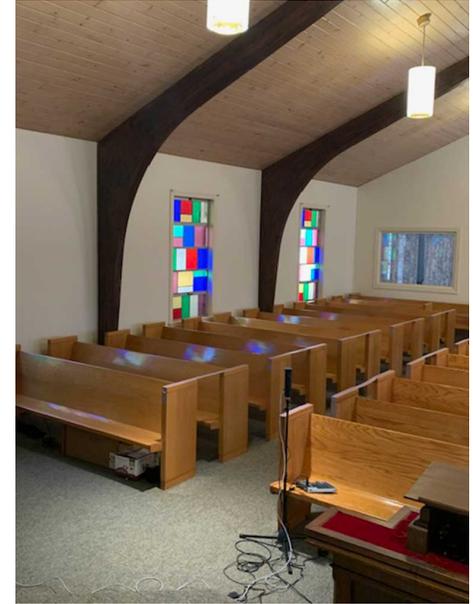
"We plan to be a positive addition to the neighborhood," said Murachanian, "and we certainly want to be a good neighbor." She said PCM would monitor the parking situation and be proactive.

## Portland Conservatory of Music: Surviving the Pandemic

During the pandemic, PCM pivoted to online learning and held recitals by video submission that aired over Zoom. It was a challenging year but brought together by an ever-greater need for music, joy, and community, students and staff adapted.

Now, with the high vaccination rate in Maine, and particularly with vaccines becoming available to children ages twelve and up, the conservatory plans for a return to normal operations. They will hold their free First Thursday Noonday Concerts at their new location on Neal Street, while maintaining their Third Thursday Noonday Concerts at the Portland Public Library. PCM is also planning several live concerts this summer on Peaks Island and other Casco Bay Islands.

And with the pandemic almost behind us and a big new space, PCM hopes to expand their programs and reach a wider segment of the community. Murachanian sees the move to the West End as part of a "resurgence after a difficult year for everyone and is excited about the possibilities of a bright future" in the new space.



-Photo courtesy of PCM





*Advance Teen Jazz Ensemble. -File photo courtesy of PCM*

Some other programs at PCM include the Boy Singers of Maine and the Girl Singers of Maine, Early Childhood Music Education Program, Jazz Studies Program, and Karger College Preparatory Program for middle and high school students. PCM provides merit scholarships and need-based financial aid. The conservatory plans to partner with Learning Works this fall to provide programming for teens and young adults.

### **WANT TO HELP?**

PCM is holding painting parties starting in July and they are asking for volunteers to help get the job done. For more information on the next painting party, call their office at (207) 775-3356 or visit <https://portlandconservatoryofmusic.org/our-new-home>.

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