

Paul Bartick

A Love Letter to SOMA



SOMA is my community. Like so many of us, my family and I moved here to embrace the richness that comes with a community that values diversity and celebrates the arts. And the pull of SOMA is strong. We moved our family to Malibu until the gravity of SOMA pulled us back.

It Takes a Village

The power of community is so ubiquitous it's become cliché. I have witnessed the immense power of a group of people united by similar interests and inspired to work together to realize a vision. For me, the inspiration for SOPAC began with my best friend Jonathan Felsman's vision, who dared to imagine SOPAC as the cultural hub of northern New Jersey at a time when it wasn't even a cultural hub of South Orange. Dear Jonathan passed away in 2009, during SOPAC's third season, and we have carried his torch since.

I started my SOPAC story co-producing our 2010 gala called "Small Town, Big Talent" with then-Executive Director Ondine Landa-Abramson. The gala celebrated Jonathan and the SOMA community's contribution to the arts—with homegrown talent including Zach Braff, Lauryn Hill, Kelly Bishop, and Christine Ebersole. There is so much talent in SOMA that the [New York Times](#) calls South Orange "the place where Broadway comes home to sleep."

I became Board Chair six years ago and, along with my colleagues, continued to build an organization that's now financially and artistically strong. SOPAC has been my happy place for 12 years and counting. It's not just *my* happy place; we have been voted New Jersey's "Favorite Small Performing Arts Center" for six years running. And our best years are ahead of us! I am excited about handing the baton to our new Board Chair Douglas Newman and Executive Director Stephen Beaudoin. We have a strong, galvanized Board and Staff that will continue to evolve SOPAC by serving our community and presenting arts experiences that transform.

As members of our community, I ask that you too participate in the evolution of SOPAC. Please donate your time, energy, and resources—coming to and giving to SOPAC often. When we contribute to our community, we receive in return the gift of giving, learning, and growing together. Borrowing a line from the Beatles, who I think said it best, "And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make."