

Press Contact: Rose Rossello, Media Specialist, (484) 706-9061

## High Tea at the Feeney Mansion with Berks Opera, Loofahs & Soaps

John P. Feeney Funeral Home is pleased to announce our latest monthly Afternoon Tea will take place on Tuesday, June 21, 2016 from 12-2pm at the Feeney Mansion, 625 N. 4th St., Reading, Pa. Featured this month will be live music by Berks Opera Company's Executive Director Tamera Black with piano accompaniment by Lars Potteiger. Also featured will be a presentation by Sheila Sacks, owner of Sheila Sacks Designs. In addition to being a web/graphic designer, Sheila launched her own business growing loofahs and creating soaps made with natural oils and vegetable-based glycerin. She will talk about her growing process and introduce some of her unique soap collections. Light hors d'oeuvres and other refreshments will be served. Proper dress is required. Ladies must wear hats and men ties. A small number of hats are available for those without. Registration is required and limited to 15 guests. Register online at [www.johnfeeneyfuneralhome.com](http://www.johnfeeneyfuneralhome.com) or call (484) 706-9061 M-F 9am-5pm. Registration closes June 20. There is no fee to attend.



### About Sheila Sacks Designs

For the last ten years, Sheila Sacks has worked as a freelance graphic/web designer for non-profits, small businesses, and religious organizations in Lehigh Valley and southeastern Pennsylvania. But she always dreamed of using her design skills to promote her own business. After moving into a home with enough space for a large garden, Sheila came across some loofah seeds and fell in love. In 2013, she founded Sheila Sacks Designs and began selling her own vine-grown loofahs, and added a line of handmade soaps, some of which include embedded loofahs. She also sells loofahs on the rope—a fun and natural alternative to a washcloth. Sheila creates a variety of seasonal soap collections, which come in nearly three dozen fragrances—from bright Grapefruit & Tea Tree to rich Hazelnut Cappuccino, as well as her best-selling soap, Tobacco & Bay Leaf. She also offers a variety of lighter and sweeter scents for those sensitive to strong fragrances. Her latest creation is her “Fandom” collections—scents inspired by popular shows such as Doctor Who, Harry Potter, and Sherlock Holmes. For more information or to shop online, visit [www.sheilasacksdesigns.com](http://www.sheilasacksdesigns.com).





*Tamera Black, Executive Director of Berks Opera Company, performing at Judy's on Cherry.*

## About Berks Opera Company

Tamera Black is the Executive Director for Berks Opera Company. She performs a wide repertoire of songs from Broadway, Jazz, and Opera. Berks Opera Company fosters and promotes the operatic art through musical education and performances, creating an innovative experience for students of the arts, professionals and the community, and increasing the diversity of available cultural experiences.



*Lars Potteiger*

## About Lars Potteiger

Lars Potteiger is a pianist, keyboardist, composer, and accordionist. He has performed with a number of great jazz artists including singer Carolyn Leonhart (Steely Dan), Grammy Award winning tenor saxophonist Wayne Escoffery, and jazz bassist Francois Moutin, to name a few. Potteiger performs locally as well as in New York. Currently Potteiger writes and plays keyboards with the contemporary jazz ensemble, The Smoke People. He also tours extensively and records with singer/songwriter Jann Klose, with whom he has played on several

Grammy-nominated recordings. Potteiger recently co-wrote and recorded with rising soul/R&B singer Aisha Eustache and can be heard on her recent release "Love and Addiction."

## History of Afternoon Tea

Afternoon tea was introduced in England by Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, in the year 1840. At the time, it was usual for people to eat only two main meals a day--breakfast and dinner at around 8 o'clock in the evening. The Duchess would become hungry around four o'clock in the afternoon. Her solution was a pot of tea and a light snack, taken privately in her boudoir during the afternoon. Later friends were invited to join her in her rooms at Woburn Abbey. This summer practice proved so popular the Duchess continued it when she returned to London, sending cards to her friends asking them to join her for "tea and a walk in the fields." Other social hostesses quickly picked up on the idea, and the practice became respectable enough to move it into the drawing room. Before long, all of fashionable society was sipping tea and nibbling sandwiches in the middle of the afternoon.

Traditionally, the upper classes would serve a 'low' or 'afternoon' tea around four o'clock, just before the fashionable promenade in Hyde Park. The middle and lower classes would have a more substantial 'high' tea later in the day, at five or six o'clock, in place of a late dinner. The names derive from the height of the tables on which the meals are served, high tea being served at the dinner table.

Mike Feeney, owner of John P. Feeney Funeral Home, learned from a former servant of the mansion's original owner, Mary Dives, that the ladies of Reading society would gather every Tuesday to enjoy afternoon tea. They would arrive in their chauffeur-driven cars, wearing their hats and finery to discuss the latest gossip. Feeney Funeral Home continues this charming traditional albeit with a bit of a modern twist.

### **About the Mansion**

Built in 1902, the turn-of-the-20th-century Feeney mansion is one of the finest examples of a bygone era in Reading. Originally the childhood home of Mary Nolan, the eldest daughter of James Nolan, a railroad tycoon, she married Edward Dives, of the Dives, Pomeroy & Stewart store. Mary lived in the home until her death in 1969, when the mansion was acquired by John P. Feeney. In 1987, the mansion was used as a location for the movie *Time of Tears*.

Above ground there are 28 rooms and six bathrooms on three floors and more than 9,200 square feet of floor space. The basement has an additional 2,200 square feet of space. The mansion contains more than 80 doors and 419 "pains" of glass.

The two-story carriage house sits at the rear of the property and can accommodate up to six overnight guests. Additional features include a queen-size bed; two full-size air mattresses; full linen service, eat-in kitchen with stove, oven, refrigerator, microwave, toaster, and coffee maker; cable TV; wireless Internet; full-size washer and dryer; full bathroom; central air/heat; smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; and off-street parking. Like the historic mansion, the carriage house is nearly 100 years old. Over the years, it has been renovated several times and served other purposes, including housing an ambulance service.

The property also has nine garden areas, which can be toured anytime during the spring and summer months.

We also maintain General Gregg's Triangle, which sits across the street from our main entrance and features the statue of Civil War hero General Gregg. For more than 10 years, we have cared for the grass, flowers, and signage at this historic landmark. In 2012, we installed the flag pole and 35-star flag used during the Civil War era.

### **About John P. Feeney Funeral Home**

John P. Feeney Funeral Home has been helping Berks County families since 1941. Located in a historic mansion, Feeney Funeral Home offers traditional and cremation services for all faiths. The funeral home is owned and supervised by Michael F. Feeney. The mansion also hosts several free art and music events throughout the year. Feeney Funeral Home supports many local organizations including Berks Opera Company, St. Francis Home, Reading Pops Orchestra, and Berks Animal Rescue League. The John P. Feeney Funeral Home has also undertaken the beautification project of Centre Park with the laying of more than 21,000 square feet of

new sod. Another 18,000 square feet will be added in the fall of 2016 making it the only park in Reading undergoing such an extensive renovation. Members of the Centre Park Historic District and City and County work crews have assisted in laying the sod. For a complete list of services and upcoming events, visit [www.john-feeneyfuneralhome.com](http://www.john-feeneyfuneralhome.com) or call 610-372-4160.

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