

Gold Coast Chamber Players Promise Stimulating Season

By Sophie Braccini



Gold Coast Chamber Players during a 2011 concert.

Photos provided



Juliana Athayde will join the Gold Coast Chamber Players for their September concert.

Gold Coast Chamber Players (GCCP) Artistic Director Pamela Freund-Striplen is very proud of the ensemble's 17th season program. "This year we've been able to invite some remarkable musicians and play pieces we've been wanting to produce for a long time," says the woman who's been called a matchmaker for her ability to pair music and musicians. "This will be a memorable season with each concert more interesting than the next."

The season starts in September with *Quintett*, a program of cello quintets by Schubert and Glazunov. "We have invited Juliana Athayde to participate in this concert," says Freund-Striplen. "She played with us when she was in high school and impressed us with her artistry even at a very young age." Athayde is now the concertmaster of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; at age 24 in 2005 she was the youngest musician in the history of this ensemble to be appointed to that position. The young violinist is also the daughter of Bob Athayde, the tireless Lafayette advocate for music and musical education.

The first concert will play twice: at 8 p.m. Friday, September 21 in the Orinda Library Auditorium, and at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, September 22 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall. "We will experiment this year with pre-concert talks in Lafayette at 7 p.m.," says Freund-Striplen. Saint Mary's College professor Lino

Rivera, Ph.D., will add context to the concert. "We want our audience to feel welcome and we'll go to any extra steps to enrich their experience," says the artistic director.

The second concert of the season is *Masterpiece*. "We wanted to present the work that very well-known composers wrote at pivotal moments of their lives," says Freund-Striplen. "For that we need an excellent pianist, and we have the pleasure to welcome this year for the first time Yana Reznik, who will also be with us for our last concert. We are so fortunate to be able to offer the quality of music you can find in the largest cities of the world," she says. The concert set for Friday, January 18 at 7:30 p.m. will present works of Beethoven, Brahms, and Faure.

On March 1 the third concert will see the return of violinist Gil Sharon and violist Ron Ephrat of the Amati Ensemble from Holland and cellist Jennifer Culp, formerly of the Kronos Quartet. Along with GCCP players they will present *Concertante*, an exploration of the sinfonia concertante, a hybrid of the symphony and the concerto, with three pieces by Mozart. "Two of the three pieces are arrangements from the Amati Ensemble," says the director.

Freund-Striplen speaks of the fourth concert as their most ambitious undertaking. It is called *American Frontiers*. "It has been a desire of mine to pair Aaron Copland's well-known evocative Appalachian Spring with Alan Louis Smith's Vignettes: Covered Wagon Women in a full display of American spirit," she says. "The difficulty for us is that Appalachian Spring requires 13 musicians and that was beyond our reach, until a generous local donor made it possible for us."

The GCCP's season finale will also be a dream-come-true for Freund-Striplen. "For years we've dreamed of presenting the Quartet for the End of Time by Olivier Messiaen," she says. "This hour-long piece is so powerful, and we will have with us clarinetist and writer Rebecca Rischin." Rischin authored the book

For the End of Time—The Story of the Messiaen Quartet and she will present Messiaen's work before the concert.

Freund-Striplen says GCCP has already doubled its season ticket sales from last year. "It took a long time to build an audience, but year after year people have seen the quality of what we provide, as well as its diversity."

For more information and tickets, visit www.geplayers.org.

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