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## Goodwin's Dream of a Princess at the Paramount Theater

By Sophie Braccini



Jonathan Goodwin improvises a piece on his concertina. Photo Sophie Braccini

If you don't know Jonathan Goodwin yet, you likely won't forget him once you meet him. A fierce emergency preparedness advocate and talented clock repair specialist, the tall Canyon resident is probably one of the only middle-aged men in the area sporting a magnificent, long dark mane, coupled with a long beard - a look that can intimidate. But as soon as the soft-spoken and articulate gentleman starts talking about one of his passions, even the stiffest of Lamorindans succumb to his charm.

An accomplished musician, Goodwin composed a touching ballad called Dream of a Princess that will be sung by the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir in December.

"I decided to follow music because it is a context within which I had the clearest sense of transcendence," says Goodwin. Music has been part of his life since his formative years. Raised in New England, Goodwin was exposed to fiddle music before learning the instrument himself. Later in high school the baritone joined the choir and continued studying classical music at the University of Maryland.

"I was close to New York City, so I tried a career as a professional singer," says Goodwin, who worked as a chorister for a few years. "I sang under the direction of many," he remembers. "Most were fine, but one in 10 times you got to work with someone exceptional, and then the experience became a wonderful thing." He still remembers the talent of Zubin Mehta and Leonard Bernstein.

"These maestros pushed their art further," he says. "In music you deal with something that has invisible roots, back over centuries. You can draw into the unconscious in ways that you can't with other things. The esthetic aspect

also brings out the idea of balancing, and refining to reveal more and more of the beauty. You end up engaging in life at a deeper level, you excavate your own capacity to perceive beauty. The more you do it, the richer your life becomes."

This deep connection was felt one Sunday morning at a Sausalito farmers' market by Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir Director Bob Geary and his wife, Sue, as they heard Goodwin play the English concertina.

"I was there to play with a friend of mine, and we started playing one of my pieces, Dream of a Princess," Goodwin says. The music came to him while driving on a cold January day in 1995 when he heard the radio announcement of Rose Kennedy's death. "The melody just came to me then," he remembers. "I pulled over and started taking note of it."

When she heard the tune, Sue Geary approached Goodwin and asked if she could arrange it for the choir. He agreed, but as time passed the Gearys were busy with other endeavors, so Goodwin offered to do it himself.

"I went to a volume of William Blake, and found a poem called The Land of Dreams, a dialogue between a father and a son as the mother died. It's simple and fits well with music," says Goodwin. "The arrangement work went quite quickly; it wanted to happen."

The Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir immediately took to the piece and sang it during their tour in Mexico. This holiday season, they will sing Dream of a Princess Saturday, Dec. 1 at Saint Paul Episcopal Church in Oakland and Sunday, Dec. 2 at Old First Church located at 1751 Sacramento St. in San Francisco. The Piedmont Choir will also join the Oakland East Bay Symphony Friday, Dec. 14 for a 'choralpalooza' at the Paramount Theater.

For more information, call the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir at (510) 547-4441.

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