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Gold Coast Chamber Players' fall concert features families of famous composers

By *Sophie Braccini*



Photo provided

Tickets are already getting scarce for the first concert of the season of the Gold Coast Chamber Players. The Lafayette orchestra has tripled the number of subscribers in recent years, surpassing the 100 count last year, so Pamela Freund-Striplen's group almost always plays to a full audience at its usual location: Lafayette Library and Learning Center Community Hall. The first concert on Sept. 23 this fall is "Family Business," featuring pieces from family members of famous composers, giving an opportunity to reflect on the inspiration and the links that run in families.

Every year the orchestra performs five concerts designed to create an experience around a theme. Freund-Striplen believes that the pre-concert talks play an important role in the pleasure people derive from the events.

Freund-Striplen explains that she constructs her programs in a multi-layered process, finding connections between composers, themes and players. She thinks of the people she wants to work with, of composers and pieces she wants performed, and then circumstances make the match. The director is in touch with musicians from all over the world and she says that somehow it always works out to create the unique events she brings to Lafayette.

This year the overarching theme is "youth." For example the Georges Enescu string quartet that Gold Coast will play for the third concert in February was composed in his youth. The director is extremely excited to present this moving epic piece in Lafayette, one of the first times in the Bay Area. Freund-Striplen wanted Romanian violinists to play the Romanian composition. She says that having musicians who were raised and have studied music where it was composed give it a different sound, because they grew up with it. Similarly, for program five, the French Connection, a French cellist, Jean-Michel Fonteneau, will join the orchestra.

The first concert will include youthful work by Felix Mendelsohn and his sister, Fanny Hensel, by Mozart's sister, and a piece by Bach's youngest son Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach for violin, viola and piano - a sonata that Freund-Striplen characterizes as a very good piece rarely played.

The second concert on Oct. 28 is called Wayfarers. While teaching a master class with Zakarias Grafilo, Freund-Striplen learned that he had arranged several Mahler pieces for a smaller orchestra. He will come and play with other members of LiederAlive! Mahler Wayfarer Songs, with Kindra Scharich, mezzo-soprano.

The third concert is Fantezie on Feb. 3, featuring George Enescu, followed by Czech Mate on March 10. The director says that she would like to be able to present Czech music every year, exploring things that are not widely known.

The final concert on May 19 will open the festivities for the celebration of the city of Lafayette's 50th anniversary. The concert will present Lily Boulanger, one of the female composers Freund-Striplen likes to feature, in Ravel's Piano Trio in A Minor and Faure's Piano Quartet No. 2 with Alex Strauss, violin, Freund-Striplen, viola, and Jeffrey Sykes, piano.

The GCCP also continues to partner with Stanley Middle School, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School and Campolindo High School educational programs.

For tickets, visit www.gcplayers.org.

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[back](#)

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